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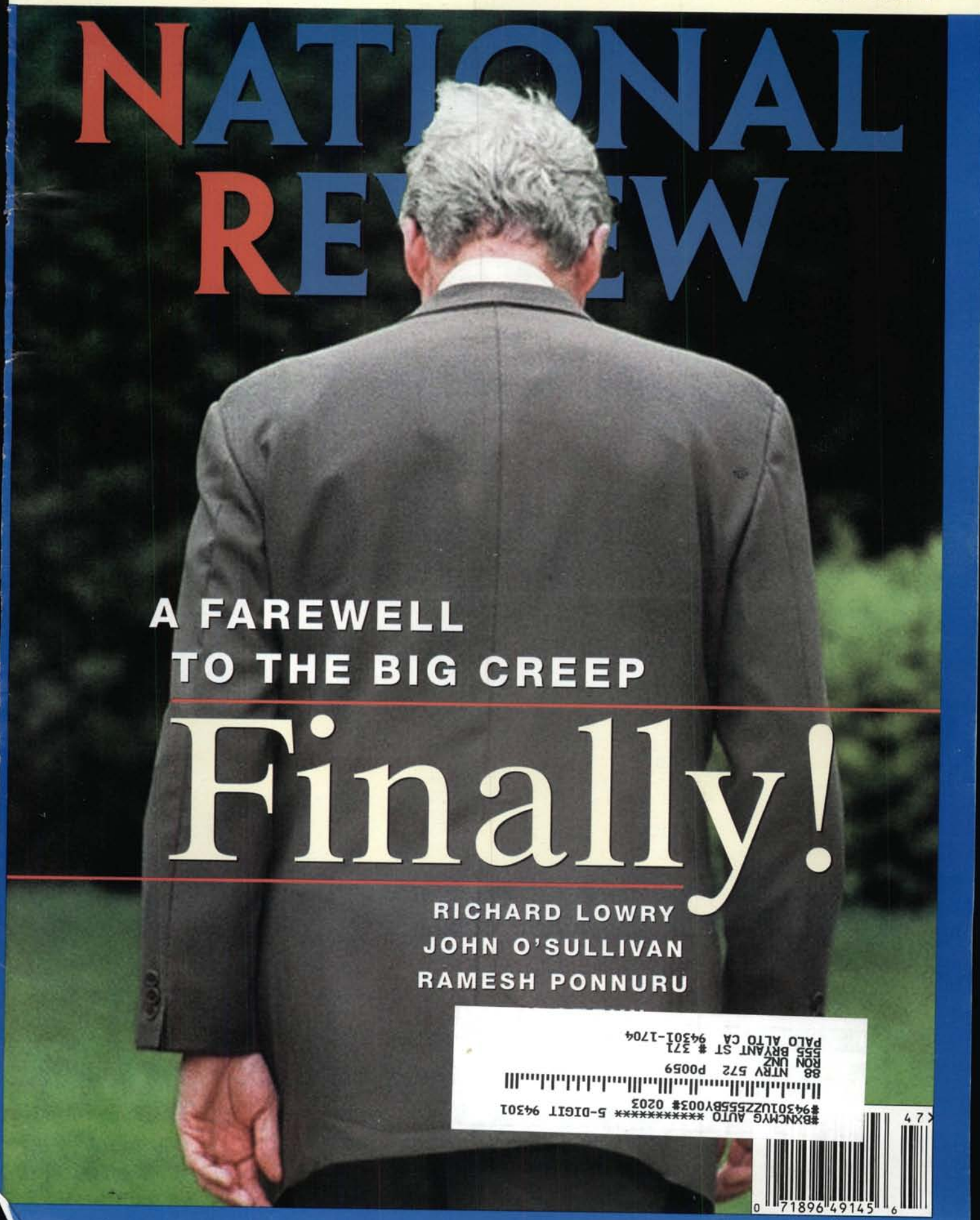
David Pryce-Jones: THE END OF BRITAIN?

NATIONAL REVIEW



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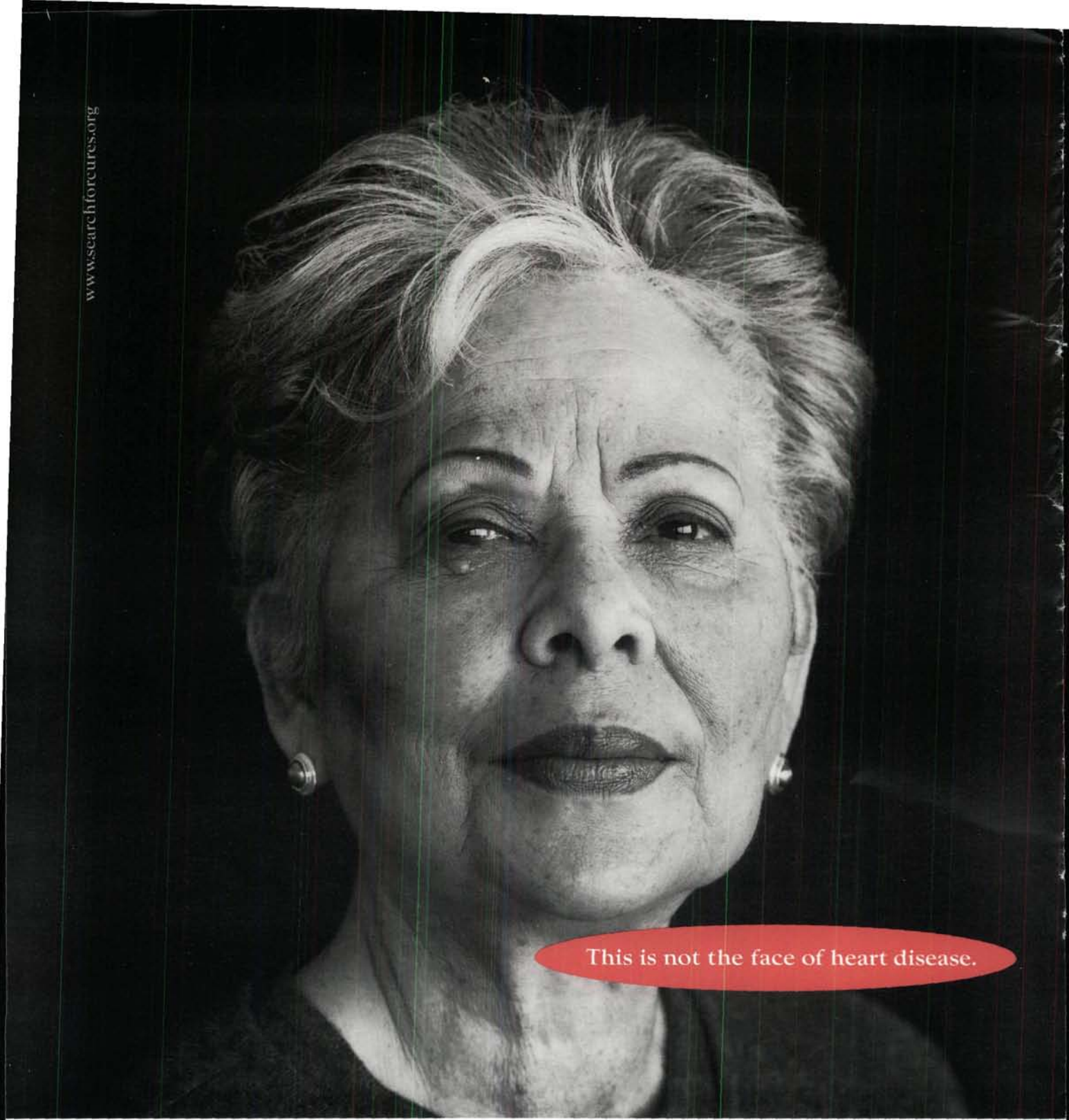

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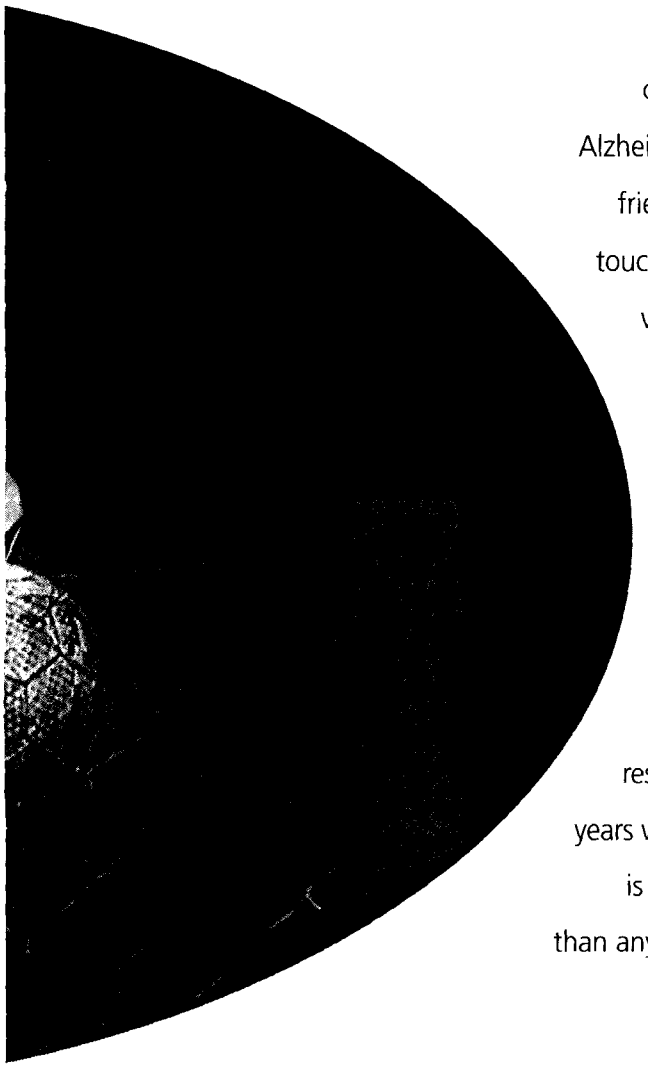

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■ LETTERS ■

GRAND GRANNY

While taking due note of Mark Steyn's tongue-in-cheek article ("Gray Dawn," Oct. 23), this 75-year-old "granny" wishes to inform him that I do not peer over the steering wheel as I creep along the highway. I also want to assure him that I am a firm believer in small government. Had I had a choice, I'd have invested my FICA deductions as I chose rather than having the government decide my benefits. The offspring of Dutch immigrants, at a young age I was indoctrinated by my parents on the benefits of free enterprise that this country offered as opposed to the restrictions that existed in Europe even at the beginning of the last century. Please do not place all of us "grannies" into one category. What would your grandmother say to such a cavalier attitude? I'd have written sooner but I was so irate I was afraid I'd say something I'd later regret.

Dorothy J. Goffer
Melbourne, Fla.

HOODWINKED

John Hood's otherwise excellent article ("Senior Slump," Oct. 23) fails to note one of the most obvious, but unspoken, social ramifications of Social Security: its deleterious effect on children. A regressive tax, it disproportionately punishes the poor and takes money out of the hands of those who need it for inoculations and child care. While 7.5 percent might be considered a small price to pay by some, the real cost is nearer to 15 percent, as employers, forced to match withholding payments, cannot pay the true wage. Hood notes the "stubbornly high rates of child poverty." We could go a long way toward alleviating that shameful condition by lowering withholding taxes or, gasp, eliminating Social Security altogether.

Abraham D. Klein
Davis, Calif.

After detailing how the senior citizens of America sold their values and independence for taxpayer money supplied by their Democrat masters, John Hood writes ". . . time travel is the only part of Well's tale that remains completely in the realm of fantasy." Not so. Democrats have also successfully captured the fantastic realm of time travel: Clinton remembers the KKK burning black churches in his youth; Hillary's mother named her after Edmund Hillary, the famous mountaineer; Pauline Gore sang the lullaby "Look for the Union Label" to the baby Al; Robert Torricelli was stigmatized by the anti-Italian prejudice of televised congressional hearings on organized crime (this was the subject of one of Florence King's all-time greatest columns), etc., etc., ad nausem.

Thornton Sanders

FREE SPEECH AND REALITY

So we are standing athwart history yelling STOP . . . *what?*

I just read John Derbyshire's piece, "First Amendment First" (Oct. 9). For the author to claim that "little harm" has actually been done over the past 50 years, while at the same time acknowledging the immense popularity of raunchy entertainers, the inflated levels of homosexuality, crime, illegitimacy, family breakups, and general mayhem, it strikes me as criminal optimism. The ripple effect of the fall of the culture results, for instance, in broad support for leaders who have insufficient regard for truth, law, morality, self-discipline, honor, right and wrong. Is this any way to run a country?

NR, I always believed, recognized that people have to be good to be free. Goodness requires some sense of morality. To blow off every assault on that assumption puts us ever further from the stability Derbyshire takes for granted.

Yeah, yeah, let Eminem rap about raping his mother and let Britney model sex to 12-year-old girls and let them do their best to debauch the culture. But there's a difference between tolerating the savages in deference to the First Amendment and failing to recognize the damage they may inflict. The context determines how we respond. If John Derbyshire's view is correct, what makes NR's posture any different from that of *People*?

Bruce P. McKechnie
Glen Mills, Pa.

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■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ *The Hotline*'s electoral scoreboard of latest state polls shows **Al Gore** leading in 19 states worth 241 electoral votes, and **George W. Bush** ahead in 28 states worth 234 (270 needed to win). . . . In *Dallas Morning News*, **Ralph Nader** says he may change outcomes in Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington State, and Wisconsin. . . . **Joe Lieberman**, on ABC's *This Week*: "I don't think Governor Bush is ready—based on his experience, his record, his proposals in this campaign—to be the kind of president that the American people need at this point in our history." . . . In NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll, 49 percent say **Dick Cheney** is more qualified to be president than Lieberman, and 26 percent say reverse. . . . By winning two gubernatorial races and 17 state legislative contests, GOP would control congressional redistricting in 182 districts, up from just five in 1991, reports *Washington Post*. States to watch on election night: Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin.

■ Gore, on surrogates' claims Bush isn't smart enough to be president, on *Today*: "I don't want to raise any questions about his capacity." . . . Gore, on how murder of **John Lennon** affected him, in *Rolling Stone*: "It was not only the loss of a great man, it was the loss of a true genius. . . . The loss of any chance the Beatles would come back together and bring us a new sensibility, from the standpoint of that incredible gestalt that they had. I thought of the senseless violence in our society, and the ease with which people who obviously shouldn't have access to guns can get them." . . . Gore, in *The Tennessean*, in 1984: "I don't pretend to have an understanding of homosexuality that sustains a discussion of its roots but I do not believe it is simply an acceptable alternative that society should affirm. That statement is bound to offend some people." . . . *New York Times*, endorsing Gore for president: "Mr. Gore brings a lifelong record of protecting basic rights for women, minorities and gays. . . ."

■ **Barbara Bush**, on Gore in third debate, on *Good Morning America*: "I thought he was gonna hit George." . . . Sen. **Bob Kerrey** (D., Neb.) on NAACP's anti-Bush ad, on *Crossfire*: "It's offensive and it's divisive." . . . **John McCain**, on whether he will run for president again, in *Boston Herald*: "I'm not sure you can capture lightning in a bottle again as we did. We captured a very unusual environment, a desire for straight talk, patriotism, a sort of anti-Clinton approach to things. . . . We had a great ride and we were very fortunate but I don't think [another run] is a likely scenario, I really don't."

■ **Dick Morris**, in *New York Post*: "Take it from me, there is no way on earth that **Hillary** [Clinton] asked Bill to veto the U.N. resolution condemning Israel and

Bill went ahead and ignored her request and had the United States abstain instead. . . . If Hillary wanted Bill to have that resolution vetoed and asked him to do it, he'd do it. No question." . . . Rep. **Tom Davis** (R., Va.), on Clinton Cabinet members campaigning for Democrats: "These are taxpayer dollars, and they are . . . using the wheels of government to advance their partisan agenda. . . . You wonder how they get anything done in their agencies." . . . Recent illness spurs speculation Sen. **Jesse Helms** (R., N.C.) won't seek reelection in 2002. . . . As head of Goldman Sachs PAC during 1990s, New Jersey Senate candidate **Jon Corzine** (D.) donated $84,250 to **Newt Gingrich** and his political committees, according to FEC records. . . . Political groups expected to spend $3 billion by Election Day, according to Center for Responsive Politics, up from $2.2 billion four years ago. . . . St. Louis leads all media markets in number of political ads aired since June. Rounding out the top five: Kansas City, Seattle, Detroit, and Spokane.

■ In on-air eulogy for U.S. Communist party head **Gus Hall**, **Peter Jennings** says, "Even after his friends . . . abandoned the cause, Hall never wavered." And this was a good thing? . . . Onetime bilingual-education champion **Herman Badillo** trashes bilingual education, in *New York Post*: "It has become 'monolingual education,' which doesn't help the students." . . . State Department backs away from anonymous memo arguing that Voice of America editorial on terrorism should not run because "[t]he 17 or so dead sailors does [*sic*] not compare to the 100-plus Palestinians who have died in recent weeks." . . . After two-year hiatus, **Paul Weyrich**'s call-in show *Direct Line* returns to America's Voice television network. . . . *The Dartmouth Review* celebrates its 20th anniversary in New York. Over 100 guests attended, including **WFB**, **George Gilder**, **Dinesh D'Souza**, **Jeffrey Hart**, and **Fr. George Rutler**.

■ British Royal Navy accepts boyfriend of its first openly gay officer as "naval wife" equivalent, reports London's *Sunday Times*. . . . Spanish Supreme Court judge killed in bombing blamed on Basque terrorists. . . . **Godfried Cardinal Danneels** of Belgium says failing health might cause Pope to step down next year; Vatican calls statement "personal opinion."

■ Bush and Gore attend Al Smith Dinner in New York, poke at each other in humorous speeches. Bush says he met woman in elevator on way to event. "She said, 'White tie's fine, but you need some more earth tones.' . . . I think her name is **Naomi [Wolf]** or something like that. . . . The odd thing was, she handed me a bill for $15,000. Can you imagine a grown man paying $15,000 for somebody to tell him what to wear? Heck, $15,000 these days gets you a sleepover in the Lincoln Bedroom." **NR**

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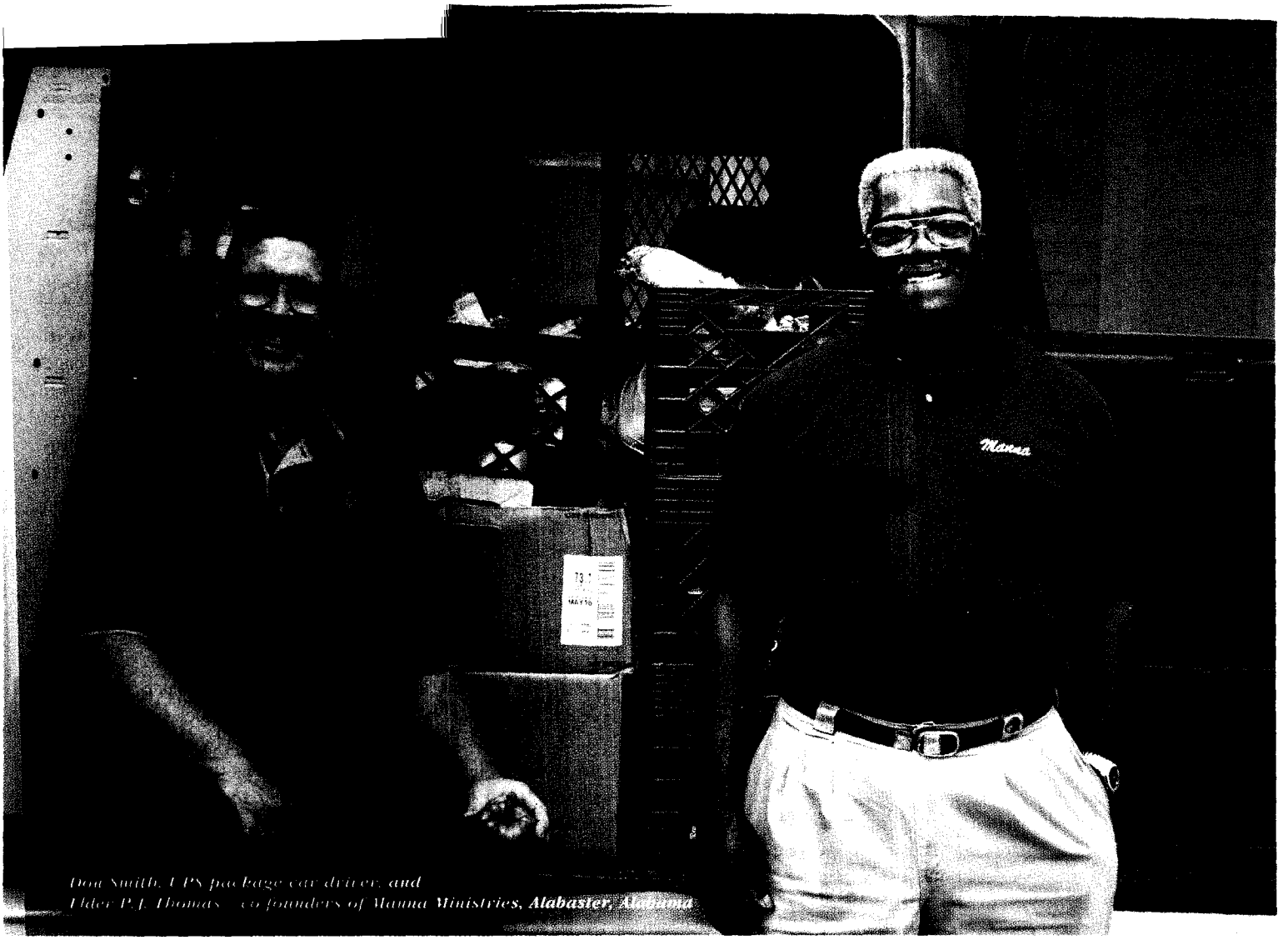

*Don Smith, UPS package car driver, and Elder P.J. Thomas — co-founders of Manna Ministries, **Alabaster, Alabama***

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THE WEEK

■ This year's Democratic slogan: Better dead than Green.

■ Liberals turned on Ralph Nader in the closing days of the campaign with the savagery of drunken English soccer fans rampaging through a continental city. The kicks and cuffs came not just from Democratic hacks like Jesse Jackson, or Democratic groups like NARAL, Friends of the Earth, and the Human Rights Campaign. The *New York Times* attacked Nader's "wrecking ball candidacy" for its "willful prankishness." Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* compared Nader to the Vietnam warriors who destroyed villages in order to save them. *The New Republic* discovered (drum roll, please) that he is an Arab-American, who published a piece on the economy in the anti-Semitic *American Mercury* in 1960, and has now "decided to play the lousy game of identity politics." Ralph Nader has always been an anticapitalist zealot and a self-righteous scold who, on the rare occasions when he is right, is so only by accident (Nader wants to reform the drug laws, but since drugs do have bad health effects, shouldn't a Naderite favor regulating them?). Liberals went ahead and made Nader a saint anyway. May they enjoy each other's company.

■ At the Republican convention in August, George W. Bush told the elderly that he would "keep the promise of Social Security . . . no changes, no reductions, no way." He went on, "Our opponents will say otherwise. This is their last, parting ploy, and don't believe a word of it." Sure enough, the Democrats are ending the campaign by accusing Bush of threatening the program's benefits. Bush's plan would let individuals invest some of their payroll taxes in capital markets. (The figure his campaign uses for illustrative purposes is 2 percent of wages, which would amount to $900 billion.) Al Gore says that those taxes are already pledged to Social Security benefits, and that Bush is promising the same money to two generations at once. Gore is empirically wrong. It is estimated that over the next ten years, payroll taxes will bring in $2.4 trillion more than Social Security needs to pay benefits to today's elderly. That extra money could finance the private accounts. Gore's larger mistake is conceptual. Social Security already promises benefits to today's retirees and tomorrow's; Bush hasn't undertaken any new obligations. The question is how to finance existing obligations. Bush's plan uses the returns from private investment to make those obligations easier to finance. The private accounts are not funded by reducing future benefits; they *are* future benefits. Gore's alternative is to lock all that money away so that it can't be productively invested. The program's obligations would have to be met, if they were met, entirely through tax increases and spending cuts. Gore's attack may be politically successful, but Bush was right back in August: Don't believe a word of it.

■ Gore has also questioned Bush's record on education in Texas. The Rand Corporation obligingly released a 14-page "study" pointing out that Texas schoolchildren have shown less improvement on national tests than on state tests. As political attacks go, this is pretty weak stuff: Nobody is claiming that Texas schools are actually getting worse; state tests usually post higher scores than national ones; and voters don't decide national elections based on state-level records anyway. After talking about the Rand paper for several days in late October, Gore dropped the subject. Wise move.

■ The NAACP is running a TV ad chiding Bush for refusing to support a "hate crimes" bill it favors in the Texas state legislature. The ad features the off-camera voice of Renee Mullins, the daughter of James Byrd, the black man who was dragged to death behind a pickup truck by three white psychopaths in 1998. She says, "When Governor Bush refused to support the hate-crimes bill, it was like my father was killed all over again." Accompanying video footage shows chains being dragged along a dirt road. Republicans might call the ad itself a "hate crime" against their candidate—if they were prone to the politicized hysteria of the concept's originators. It is shameful enough that the NAACP is now dragging Byrd's corpse through the airwaves.

■ Visitors to the Tower of London may have noticed the huge steel codpiece prominent at the front of King Henry VIII's custom-made suit of armor. In those days, it was thought good PR to advertise a monarch's ability to engender a dynasty, in ways even the least sophisticated of His Majesty's subjects could not miss. Now these older modes of political display are being revived. Al Gore has appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, his bulging crotch at what photographers call the eye-focus of the picture. The vice president's minders have let it be known that the area of interest was even more distinctive before airbrushing. Meanwhile, our priapic president sat for the cover of *Esquire* with legs wide apart, the photographer apparently kneeling before him at groin height. You think this stuff is gross? Wait till we've regressed all the way to harems and eunuchs.

■ In a farewell interview with *The Advocate*, a gay magazine, Bill Clinton compared his travails during the impeachment crisis with those of blacks and homosexuals—"people who've been targeted, who've been publicly humiliated and abused." The paradigm of what political scientist Kenneth Minogue called the "suffering situations" here reaches its senseless extreme. For centuries, blacks in America have coped with racists—people who disdained them for the color of their skin. Homosexuals nowadays claim their "orientation" is given at

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rket and the Consumer

Rising oil prices, tensions in the Middle East, and weaker-than-expected earnings reports from major corporations have worked together to reduce stock prices from their levels in the summer of 2000. The Standard and Poor's 500 stock index, a broad gauge of stock market valuation, is more than 10 percent below its peak, and some market sectors such as technology have experienced sharper declines. The recent pullback comes after years of favorable stock market returns, which generated much discussion of the "wealth effect" and the stock market's role in sustaining the 1990s economic expansion. But just **how important is the stock market in affecting the real economy and consumer spending in particular?** Is the concern that a decline in share prices could end the economic expansion justified?

The existence of a wealth effect associated with stock market fluctuations is beyond dispute. If the value of the stock market rises, the household sector will have greater resources available to finance spending. What *is* open to question is the timing and magnitude of the wealth effect. It is difficult to measure the effect of stock market movements on consumer spending. Although the stock market affects wealth, it is also possible for spending decisions to affect the stock market. A systematic uptick in consumer spending, for reasons unrelated to stock market wealth, could boost share prices, as investors see higher profits flowing from greater product demand. Studies of consumer spending and stock prices, using both long spans of historical data and short-term market movements such as the 1987 stock market crash, suggest that each trillion-dollar increase in stock market wealth raises annual consumer spending by between twenty and forty billion dollars.

To provide perspective on both wealth and consumer spending, it is useful to know that, at the beginning of 2000, U.S. households owned corporate stock worth roughly 13.3 trillion dollars. Household net worth was much larger—just over $42 trillion. Even after the rise of share prices in the 1990s, tangible assets account for roughly the same share of household net worth as corporate stock. But corporate stock represents twice as large a share of wealth today as it did a decade ago, meaning that **share price movements can have a larger effect on consumer spending than they did in the past.**

If past patterns can be used to forecast the future, then one can gauge how a 10 percent stock market correction might affect consumer spending. Such a market drop translates into a wealth reduction of about 1.3 trillion dollars. This translates into a drop in consumer spending of between 25 and 50 billion dollars, or between 0.4 and 0.8 percent of total outlays. This is a significant drop, but such a wealth effect does not seem large enough *by itself* to derail the current expansion. If consumers react to a decline in share values by losing confidence in economic policy, and consequently reduce their spending by more than the simple wealth effect calculus suggests, stock market changes could have a more substantial effect.

— James Poterba

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Smug Central

In an Esquire *interview, Bill Clinton said that Republicans owe the country an apology for impeaching him. Just to make it clear that he won't be doing any more apologizing himself, Clinton struck a pose for the cover photo that recaptured some of the magic of his trysts with Monica. Here Roman Genn renders the president of self-satisfaction.*

birth, and lump their enemies—who range from gay-bashers to opponents of civil unions—by analogy, with racists. Bill Clinton, who preyed on women who strayed into his orbit, and lied about it in public and in court, now implicitly argues that that's just the way he is, and that anybody who doesn't like it is bigoted and irrational. Men have no free will, and should not make judgments. Q.E.D.

■ The Missouri Senate race has moved from nasty to tragic to macabre with unseemly swiftness. Gov. Mel Carnahan, a Democrat, had looked likely to lose to the incumbent, Republican John Ashcroft, after a bitter campaign of charge and countercharge. But Carnahan died in a plane crash on October 16. His poll numbers promptly shot up. He might even win the election—in which case the new Democratic governor has announced he would appoint Carnahan's widow, Jean. She is benefiting from voters' natural sympathy, and Ashcroft cannot do much about that. But a vote for Carnahan has become a way for Missourians to pick "none of the above," which is an especially appealing choice given how mindless the race had been before the accident. Ashcroft can do something about that: namely, offer voters tax cuts, Social Security reform, and a ban on partial-birth abortion as reasons to vote for him. To beat a dead man, he needs some live issues.

■ Senate Democrats have scuttled the "Born Alive Infants Protection Act," which would protect infants who survive attempted abortions. But they did so through parliamentary maneuvers that kept them from having to debate the issue. All the more reason for Republicans to come back to it early next year—and force the Democrats either to vote for the bill, or to defend the indefensible.

■ "Go to hell," are the words which Yasser Arafat, on behalf of the Palestinians, chose to encourage Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak to continue with the local peace process. He wants a state of his own, believes that it is within his grasp, and may well soon decide unilaterally to declare it. But in his eyes, this state must not appear to be an Israeli gift; it has to be born from a bloody war of independence, the way Israel once was. Rejecting compromise, he rejoices that boys and teenagers are out on the barricades, throwing stones with the militias behind them now and again firing weapons. An updated version of the old Palestinian fantasy of throwing the Jews into the sea, this war of independence serves primarily to remind all Israelis that in the last resort their survival is at stake. So far over 140 people have been killed—fewer than one in ten of them Israelis—and some 5,000 have been injured. There is nothing to show for all this suicidal violence. Provocation leads to retaliation in the usual grim and gathering spiral. Arafat is ensuring that if Israelis indeed go to hell, they will find the Palestinians there before them.

■ Bill Clinton's reckless and shameless pursuit of "legacy" photo ops, at no matter what cost to the public fisc or the nation's security, proceeds apace. With matters in the Middle East and Ulster all coming embarrassingly unwrapped, our president has turned his attention to Korea. Off went Madeleine Albright to Pyongyang, where Kim Jong Il—revered by his people as "Great Shakedown Artist"—promised that he might, just might, slow down his nuclear-weapons and missile programs a tad if the U.S. taxpayer would kindly feed his people, fuel his army's trucks and planes, and keep his restive nomenklatura supplied with free Courvoisier, Benson & Hedges, and Viagra. Albright, all smiles, looked ready to agree, as Kim took her along to a vast, triumphal demonstration commemorating his dad's launching of the Korean War 50 years ago, in which 34,000 Americans died. Get ready for the photo op of our president with the Great Blackmailer. The best we can hope for is that this time the photographers will focus their cameras at some level higher than the waist.

■ Visiting tsarist Russia in 1839, the farsighted Marquis de Custine reported that "Russians have a dexterity in lying and a natural talent for falsehood." What would Custine have to add about the fate of the *Kursk*, the advanced nuclear submarine which sank in the Barents Sea in August with the loss of all 118 crew? Western intelligence monitored two successive explosions in the propulsion section or the torpedo compart-

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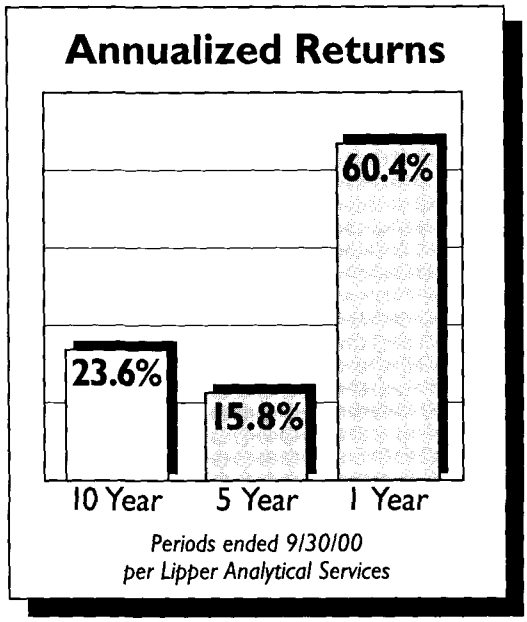

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A Late Move

On the Coast, where Nader drew
Like ads with an ocean view,
Davis (he's the governor)
Sent an SOS to Gore;
Al "My Own Man" Gore replied
With a nonchalant aside,
So, in desperation, Davis
E-mailed Clinton, "Come and save us!"

—W. H. von Dreele

ment. The admiral commanding the Russian navy still insists that there may have been a collision with a Western submarine, although there was none in the area. All 118 crew were said to have died instantly, and urgent rescue efforts were therefore judged pointless. Now divers reveal that in fact 23 seamen had retreated to a rear compartment to wait for the help that Putin and his admirals and advisers did not trouble to send. Before dying, a junior officer by the name of Dmitri Kolesnikov wrote a farewell letter with the poignant words, "None of us can get to the surface." Divers have recovered this letter, wrapped in plastic, from his corpse. The gamut of official prevarications and lies amounts to sanction for homicide. Many Russians are expressing anger in the media about the *Kursk* horror, and that is the only thing that might surprise Custine.

■ Dennis Heiner, the 73-year-old who walked into the Brooklyn Museum of Art last December and splashed white paint on Chris Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary*, was convicted of criminal mischief and two other misdemeanors. Ofili's painting, part of the controversial *Sensation* exhibit, depicted a stylized Mary with a clump of elephant dung for a breast and surrounded by pornographic photos, and was much praised by the New York media. When Heiner "defaced" Ofili's work, the art world, usually so keen on transgressive acts, rediscovered bourgeois morality in a hurry. The painting has been mostly restored, and the museum provided no damage estimate, likely because the episode *increased* the value of the painting. In trial, Heiner's attorney defended him on First Amendment grounds: Ofili was exercising his right to express himself by putting poop and porno on Mary, Heiner was doing the same by smearing paint on Ofili's work. A silly argument, yes, but no sillier than the response given by Assistant District Attorney Noel Downey, who said that Heiner's vandalism wasn't protected speech because he went after just one of the paintings rather than the *Sensation* exhibit as a whole. "He might have had an argument if he emptied the shark tank or kicked the bloody head across the floor," Downey said, referring to two of the exhibit's other charmers. By that logic Heiner would have been in the clear if he'd just burned the whole building down. Which, come to think of it, might have shown sound aesthetic as well as legal judgment.

■ Before Leno, before Carson, before Jack Paar, there was Steve Allen, creator and first host of *The Tonight Show*. Allen did a million other things, from comedy to songwriting to public television. At the height of his career, he was an Adlai Stevenson liberal, modishly self-flagellant and anxious. At the end of his life, however, in fulfillment of Robert Conquest's law that everyone is conservative in the field of his own endeavor, he looked at contemporary television and decided that it was a sewer of violence and filth. He took out full-page ads in major newspapers to say so, and to urge viewers to complain to networks and sponsors. His death, at age 78, leaves the field, alas, to Jerry Springer. R.I.P.

POLITICS

Back to Hope

On his way out the door, Bill Clinton gave an interview to *Esquire* magazine, which ran it with a Monica's (and media's) -eye-view portrait. The cover art is a keepsake, in case anyone forgets, of the Clintonian style. The interview answers the question, what will Mr. Clinton—a young ex-president—be doing for next 30 years? He will be justifying himself, as cleverly and as assiduously as Richard Nixon.

Since Arthur Schlesinger Sr., historians have been sending each other questionnaires designed to rate the presidents. All these exercises try to slice it too fine. Except for the perennial winners—Washington, Lincoln—and the perennial dogs—Buchanan, Andrew Johnson—most presidents, from stars like Jefferson to the forgotten bewhiskered Republicans of the late 19th century, deserve solid Cs. America is a large and self-propelled country. Most of our presidents don't get in its way. Clinton's policies net out in this broad middle range.

His personal example, though far more negative, was still well within the middle range of his time. Because contemporary presidents are so visible, we tend to grant them an influence they do not in fact possess. One Clinton critic, Russ Smith of the *New York Press*, even blamed him for casual Fridays. But America was becoming coarse and weepy without Bill Clinton. The Supreme Court speaks of prevailing community standards; Bill Clinton reflected them. Dostoevsky described Fyodor Karamazov as "evil and sentimental." Bill Clinton is gross and sentimental, but then so is much of his country's entertainment.

He did, however, leave one public mark, unique to himself. In the Farewell Address, George Washington and Alexander Hamilton collaborated on a famous paragraph about the role of religion and morality in national life. Feeling the need to give an example of religion's utility, they did not cite family values, or keeping kids off drugs. They cited legal oaths. Without "the sense of religious obligation," they wrote, the oaths that are "the instruments of investigation" in courts would lose their

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force, thus putting property, reputation, and life itself at risk.

Both men were moral realists. They knew, as Ken Starr was accused of not knowing, where babies come from. They knew where illegitimate babies come from (Hamilton was one). Hamilton had also been the star in a political sex scandal, the nation's first. Washington's watchword was that "we must take men as we find them." But certain things, they believed, could not be tolerated, and lying in court was one of them.

Bill Clinton's time of troubles began when he lied in court, and in public, not to protect some vision of national security, but to secure his own power. He was under threat because of his casual, and compulsive, gratification of personal desires. Most presidents have wrestled with questions of morality and law. Eisenhower lied about the U-2. McKinley prayed before declaring war on Spain. Jefferson worried that buying Louisiana violated the Constitution. Bill Clinton, uniquely, subverted the institutions he was pledged to uphold to serve his whims and save his hide. It was, properly speaking, a royal offense—something Charles II might have done for a mistress. Royal offenses were one of the reasons Americans wanted a republic.

Happily, he came late in our history, when our traditions are so settled that rotation in office gives us a chance to regenerate. Also happily, he was base enough to attempt nothing worse (the main difference between Bill Clinton and Aaron Burr, the founder he most resembles, is that Burr was brave as well as suave and intelligent). He did the worst he could, which was greater than his best. Yet he is fading and shrinking even now, and we have reason, if we work, to hope.

THE BALKANS

Burden-Splitting

THE foreign-policy establishment is tsk-tsking a George W. Bush proposal to bring, in consultation with NATO, a gradual end to America's peacekeeping role in Bosnia and Kosovo. But Bush's idea shows a more mature understanding of the proper use of American power than that of any of his self-consciously "responsible" critics. Bush understands that in the post–Cold War world, the essence of statecraft is discrimination—about where, why, and how American power should be deployed. After drops in military spending and a jump in overseas deployments, even a small humanitarian- intervention operation now undermines the military's ability to handle more consequential conflicts elsewhere.

Bush wants to focus the U.S. military on what's truly important—fighting and winning wars and preventing them from occurring in the first place. This task requires a relentless focus on training our warriors, and making sure they keep a razor-sharp edge. Every U.S. combat unit sent to open schools in Kosovo is a unit that can no longer perform reliably in combat. And the Balkans deployment, including logistical support, ties down much of America's army in Europe.

Bush critics say we must stay in the Balkans to preserve NATO. But this confuses means and ends. NATO (or any U.S. security alliance) is simply a means to promote the end of U.S. interests. Its invocation cannot justify a deployment that undermines our ability to protect our global interests.

Yes, the Europeans are now complaining that the U.S. won't be bearing the "shared risks" of peacekeeping. But nobody was talking about shared risks during the fighting in Kosovo last spring—when the United States was providing over 70 percent of the aircraft and flying over 80 percent of the critical combat missions.

The fact is that Europe is no longer capable of sharing risks in major combat operations because Europe's capacity to fight has been drastically diminished. America has twelve large and twelve small aircraft carriers; Europe only four small ones. We have a fleet of long-range heavy bombers; Europe, not one. We have advanced stealth fighters and bombers; Europe none. And so on.

If there is a crisis in the Pacific, the Persian Gulf, or anywhere else in the world—including the fringes of Europe—the United States is the only country that can project power effectively and defeat a determined enemy. A false egalitarianism in peacekeeping—using American troops for tasks any of the allies is capable of performing—will merely dull U.S. combat units and leave no one to do the real work of global security.

CULTURE WATCH

Ballplayers and Valets

NEW YORK had its subway series, and the Yankees added another trophy to Ruth's house. But the local jubilation was tinged with nostalgia, because there had not been a subway series since 1956, in contrast with the preceding decade, when they had been regular occurrences. The postwar era of baseball was lovingly described by Yankee fan and historian Donald Kagan: "The Yankees ruled this world as the Olympian gods ruled theirs. The mighty Dodgers and Giants challenged their supremacy as the Titans and Giants challenged the Olympians, but to no more avail. The Yankees ruled with steadiness, serenity, and justice, and only the unworthy gnashed their teeth in envy . . ."

Coincidentally, the presiding deity of the early part of that era, Joe DiMaggio, was the subject of a biography that appeared with the 2000 subway series: *Joe DiMaggio: The Hero's Life*, by Richard Ben Cramer. The book and its reviews offer a Rorschach of contemporary attitudes towards excellence and performance.

Cramer represents the *People/National Enquirer* culture of celebrity—gawking at the famous, while taking revenge on them for one's own infatuation by focusing on their woes and vices. Thus Elvis impersonators imitate the fat druggie, not the young innovator; Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana were deified by their deaths. Along with his gossip, Cramer peddles a theory that we force our heroes into this destructive model; certainly he forces DiMaggio into it.

To Cramer's cultural left was John Gregory Dunne's review

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in *The New Yorker*. Cramer, Dunne argues, wasn't harsh enough: He should have focused even more on DiMaggio's Mob ties, womanizing, and wife-beating, and done so in a tone of anaesthetic disdain. "It is difficult," sneers Dunne, "to write a 546-page biography about a hostile, misogynistic, avaricious, and mean-spirited man." Maybe the contract should have gone to Dunne's wife, Joan Didion.

Wilfrid Sheed, in the *New York Times* Book Review, offered a lonely moment of sanity. Acknowledging all of DiMaggio's failings, he redirects our attention to his achievement, which was not just to play baseball superbly—his streak of hitting safely in 56 games will stand until they turn the balls into rubber—but to inspire his team. During the three years before he joined, "when Lou Gehrig had been . . . hero in residence, the Yankees had won no pennants at all. In Joe D.'s first four years, they would win 16 out of 19 World Series games." After the war, he led "a makeshift, rebuilding Yankees team to four more world championships through sheer imperious example." No choking in the clutch for him.

All men are flawed, but some add to the general stock of aspiration and accomplishment. If we do not recognize this, we make ourselves smaller—and maybe foreclose the chance to grow. Bards will be unemployed if there are no heroes. But will heroes come if there are no bards?

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Where can I buy one of those double-bladed axes Al Gore talked about?

I have a double-bitted one, with which I'm quite competent, but think of all I could do with one that has four cutting edges!

Sincerely,
Joe Cook
Maryland Heights, Mo.

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I just finished reading your book *Nearer, My God.* (I never read a book until it has languished for a while in a public library.)

Being a Catholic, and a so-called conservative Catholic at that, I enjoyed its content, tone, and point of view, with just a few exceptions. But my purpose here isn't to critique your book. I would, rather, like to draw your attention to a minor, but still important, flaw in grammar, specifically your, or your editor's, somewhat casual use of restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers, also referred to these days as essential and nonessential modifiers. Being a retired teacher of English composition with too much time on my hands, I occasionally indulge in this kind of thing, importunate though it may be.

The signal flag was raised for me up front, in "Acknowledgements," where you wrote, "My brother (Judge) James, and sisters Patricia Bozell, Jane Smith, and Priscilla Buckley read it, as also *my wife Pat* . . ." Without putting a comma before your wife's name, thereby setting it off with commas, you make of the name a restrictive (essential) modifier, telling the educated reader that you have more than one wife: my wife Pat, as opposed to, say, my wife Gertrude. On the other hand, you, or your editor, handle the problem correctly in other places, e.g., on p. 126, where you refer to "my nephew Michael." Here Michael is meant to be restrictive of the meaning because you have more than one nephew. But the damage has been done, so by the time literate and careful readers get to p. 127 and read, "My friend and theological consultant Fr. Kevin Fitzpatrick," they don't know whether Fr. Fitzpatrick is your only combination friend and theological consultant or, if the punctuation is taken literally, simply one of two or more.

Ironically, in one important respect you seem aware of the problem I'm discussing; otherwise you wouldn't give your name as William F. Buckley Jr., dropping the usual, yet incorrect, comma before Jr., which is, after all, a restrictive modifier.

Let me add here that none of this would be important if you weren't a careful, highly literate, and predominantly "correct" writer. Because you are, flaws that would blend almost unnoticed into the grammatically casual prose of other writers stand out in yours, as would a physical flaw on an otherwise handsome face. And let me add as well that I didn't comb through your book like a schoolmarm, ready to pounce on every mistake. It's just that after scrutinizing thousands of student papers, I am practically incapable of reading anything without noticing problems of grammar, syntax, mechanics, and usage. It's an occupational hangover, and it afflicts me no less than a retired football player is afflicted by his bad knees.

Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Buckley. Again, I enjoyed the book and am grateful to you for writing it. Like you, I am chagrined at what has been made of Vatican II. I believe that the elimination of the Latin Mass was not done by the formally convened council, as you seem to suggest, but by the recommendation of a special panel subsequently convened by Paul VI. Also like you, I was, and am, a great fan of Malcolm Muggeridge. I am especially grateful for your having included the piece on the Crucifixion by Maria Valtorta. I had never seen it before. My Good Fridays will never be the same.

My best to your wife, or wives, as the case may be.

Respectfully,
Jim Friedenbach

Dear Mr. Friedenbach: What a wonderful letter! Many thanks. I am appalled that your return address does not appear on it, so I do hope you will be seeing this issue. . . . If any reader knows Mr. F., do me the kindness of calling this issue to his attention.

Cordially,

—WFB

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■ COVER STORY ■

Trivial Pursuits

Clinton's record

RAMESH PONNURU

BILL CLINTON is in the process of proving that a presidential legacy is like individual happiness or national greatness: something achieved mostly as a byproduct of activities undertaken for other ends, rather than as part of a self-conscious design. His is a negative proof. Never has a president mused as much, or as openly, about his place in history as our Solipsist-in-Chief has. But rarely has it been harder to determine what that place should be.

Part of the difficulty, as liberal columnist E. J. Dionne Jr. has pointed out, is that almost anything one could say about Clinton's presidency is true—and so is its opposite. Did he move the country right or left? Yes. Strengthen the Democrats or weaken them? Both. Was he the perfect president for the times, or a historical accident? A case could be made either way. He was larger than life, and so, so small.

We'll have a better picture of his presidency in a few years' time, after we will have seen what further fruits his policies will bear and how his successor will govern. If, say, China were to nuke Los Angeles next year, the defects of Clinton's foreign and defense policies would presumably get more space in the encyclopedia entry on him. But we can essay some judgments right now.

Clinton's economic record, it has to be said, is pretty good. Not, to be sure, as good as the conventional wisdom would have it: A recovery from the brief recession of the early 1990s was already underway when Clinton was elected, and his tax increase of 1993 was followed by a few years of subpar growth. But Clinton deserves credit for promoting free trade, allowing Alan Greenspan to vanquish inflation, and acceding to Republican demands for a reduction in the capital-gains tax. The combination of these policies more than compensated for the tax hike. Hillary Rodham Clinton should

take a bow, too. Her rigidity doomed the administration's health-care plan and thus was a boon for the economy.

Clinton's biggest contribution to the economy was not to do much to screw it up. This is not the faint praise it sounds like: It is a boast that could not be made by most recent presidents, including Republicans Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and George Bush.

Moreover, the positive aspects of Clinton's economic record are likely to endure. The inflationist wing of the Democratic party, strong as recently as a decade ago, hardly exists any more. In the late 1980s, leading Democratic intellectuals wanted the government to direct economic development and to channel subsidies to prominent industries. They were itching for a trade war with our major allies. Nobody serious believes any of that any more. Clinton consolidated a Reaganite consensus on these issues, just as President Eisenhower ratified FDR's New Deal.

Clinton moved right on moral and cultural issues, too, though this truth has sometimes been obscured by his trysts. Previous Democrats had suffered for their liberal attitudes on work and welfare, sex and family, race, crime, and religion. But Clinton declared that abortion should be rare. He decried illegitimacy. He signed a Republican bill ending the federal welfare entitlement. He even funded abstinence-education programs. Michael Dukakis had fairly radiated an aggressive secularism; Clinton's rhetoric was steeped in religion, and sometimes delivered from the pulpits of black churches.

In some respects, the country became more socially conservative under Clinton. Rates of abortion, illegitimacy, divorce, and teen sexual activity all began to decline. But social liberalism comes in bourgeois and antibourgeois varieties, and the former—the liberalism of niceness and tolerance—also made strides. Public acceptance of homosexuality grew, probably helped along by the president's association with gay lobbies. But this is yet another feature of the Clinton years that cannot simply be described as a shift to the left or right. Gays and lesbians have spent the Clinton years trying to join the army, to marry, and to lead Boy Scout troops. They have sought, in other words, to be integrated into society's most conservative institutions; to lead the sort of square lives that most heterosexuals long ago grew tired of. It is because of such shifts that after three decades of culture wars, a measure of peace has broken out. (Granted, conservatives cannot be wholly pleased by the terms of this peace.)

America's racial politics are relatively placid as well. To the extent Clinton deserves credit for the good economy, he also deserves credit for the reduction in both black unemployment and racial tensions that that economy has produced. On the other side of the ledger must be set Clinton's occasional race-baiting, as when he accuses Republicans of having a policy of holding up black and Hispanic judicial nominees. And while it may be argued that Clinton ended divisive political arguments over immigration and racial preferences, his policies may be storing up racial trouble for the future.

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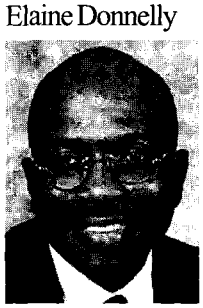
Phyllis Schlafly

Grover Norquist

Elaine Donnelly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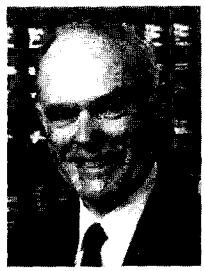
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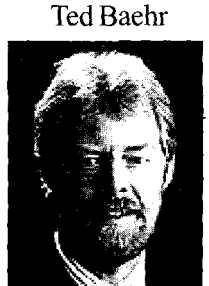
Brent Bozell

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Clinton ended, at least temporarily, a final set of battles: those over the role of the federal government, which, it is now clear, will neither expand dramatically nor shrink at all. Welfare reform helped to relegitimize the federal government. Clinton was also shrewd to expand tax credits for the working poor. Previous Democrats ran into trouble by taxing other Democrats; by taking them off the tax rolls, Clinton was able to tax Republicans for the benefit of Democrats. As a result, it's been much harder to cut tax rates.

■

The question left for Clinton's successor is what to make of a diminished thing.

■

Blunting the conservative attack on the welfare state was Clinton's greatest achievement for liberalism. In 1996, he said that the era of big government was over. But it may be truer to say that the era of arguing about big government is over, except in the most abstract of terms. Newt Gingrich was the last politician who railed against the "liberal welfare state"; not even conservative writers use such terms any more. Republicans no longer make principled objections to a federal role in education policy.

But liberals paid a steep price for this victory. They had to become more statist as well, buying popularity by abandoning libertarian positions on crime, foreign policy, and civil liberties. They lost their moral authority and, perhaps, some portion of their self-respect by becoming apologists for Clinton's compromises and his abuses. Clinton made the Democrats competitive again in presidential races, but devastated them down the ticket. The Democrats are a minority in Congress and the states, and they are more dependent than ever on a labor movement that is itself declining.

Moreover, Clinton's triumph for liberalism was a matter of politics much more than of policy. In many respects, Clinton's has been a bystander presidency. It may be true that if not for Clinton welfare would not have been reformed, capital-gains taxes not cut, and NAFTA not passed. But Newt Gingrich was at least as indispensable for each achievement. Most of the rest of Clinton's policy legacy is trivia: paid volunteerism for kids and unpaid leave for new parents.

It is tempting to suggest that this is in fact Clinton's real legacy: the trivialization of the presidency, of the government, of politics. The presidency may have grown more powerful by some measures: the independent-counsel law is dead, and it has become more acceptable to govern through executive order and regulatory fiat. But the presidency has never had less respect. Washington has never seemed more irrelevant. Clinton suggests, deceptively, that he has reduced the federal workforce. But it is surely true that the government's place in the American imagination has been downsized. Politics is now a spectator sport, which is to say a television show.

But this judgment may be too harsh—or, to put it another way, even the view that Clinton's chief legacy was to shrink the presidency may ascribe too much importance to him. The end of the Cold War was bound to alter the nature of the presidency. (Neither Clinton nor George W. Bush would have won a presidential nomination if the Soviet Union were still a menace.) It's not Clinton's fault that television's cultural influence peaked during his tenure.

Clinton probably contributed to these trends, but he didn't cause them. The empathetic style with which he is identified has been gaining force for three decades, as his generational cohort advanced through their careers. His presidency, and particularly the Lewinsky scandal, coarsened the culture; the stain on her dress is a stain on his record. But by the mid '90s, radios were already broadcasting stuff that would have shocked listeners ten years before. (Hard as it is to remember, there was a national controversy over whether stations would play George Michael's song "I Want Your Sex" when it came out in 1987.)

Bill Clinton was a man of many firsts: the first Democrat to be reelected to a second full term as president since FDR; the first president to talk about his underwear in public, or apologize for an affair. But the era of Bill Clinton is ending. It is impossible to say how much his presidency reflected his times, and how much they reflected it. The question left for Clinton's successor is what to make of a diminished thing. **NR**

■ COVER STORY II ■

Ethno-Cultural Liberalism

Clinton's innovation

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

IT is a mark of President Clinton's ambiguity as a political leader that his opponents are generally happier than his supporters with the results of his presidency—even though he fought a series of successful partisan battles against Republicans in Congress. Stock-market traders are more pleased with the economic and welfare policies of the last eight years than are social workers. Business has defeated labor in every major battle from NAFTA to China's entry into the World Trade Organization. And Republicans have deprived the Democrats of the U.S. Congress, major governorships, and state houses galore during a period marked by the personal ascendancy of a Democratic president.

One result of this was that liberal Democrats flocked to Ralph Nader during the election campaign. Even though many deserted him in the final stages under the partisan pressure of their traditional loyalties, they had wanted to proclaim that liberalism still existed as a moral force in politics—and that it had not been killed off by Clinton's cynical patronage. And if liberalism is interpreted as high redistributive taxation, social ownership, economic regulation, and substantively egalitarian social policies, then Clinton was indeed a flawed figure who regularly sold out his liberal colleagues by such actions as signing the welfare-reform bill in 1996.

But is that the correct definition of liberalism in the year 2000? Economic statism on that model is simply no longer credible. The collapse of Com-

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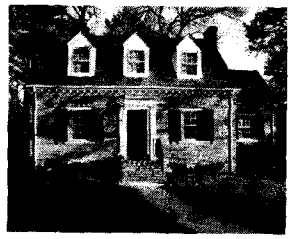

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munism produced an intellectual revolution in economic theory and policy. The textbooks still in use in the late '80s peddled such nonsense as that government planning could outproduce private enterprise, and that the East German standard of living was higher than that in Britain. It became impossible to believe such things when we saw how wretchedly people had lived in Eastern Europe. And the finance ministries of the world suddenly started talking free-market policies and entrepreneurship.

Left-wing parties had little choice but to adapt to this reality. If they had continued to spout traditional economic interventionism, they would never have been elected. As it was, they developed the formula: "We will administer free-market capitalism more compassionately than the capitalists and their parties." Armed with that slogan, Leftist parties have won power throughout the advanced industrial world with the exceptions of Spain and Australia.

If the planned economy was out, however, the planned society still had prospects. After all, it is much easier to justify intervention in the economy on grounds of equity than of efficiency. The test of efficiency is harsh but clear: Does the state-owned company make a profit? It is not hard to discover, therefore, if an intervention has succeeded or failed. It can therefore be discredited, as economic regulations frequently were. But there is no real test for regulations designed to effect equity. If a racial preference fails to produce the "right" ethnic balance in a company's workforce, that failure can be employed to justify extending the regulation or making its application more rigid. If an environmental regulation saves a small fish at great cost to local property developers, that is seen as simply a necessary cost.

Whether as a result of this advantageous condition or not, regulation under Clinton has spread like kudzu. We have regulation on all sorts of grounds—in particular, on grounds of the environment, our own health, and antidiscrimination. And though the rationale of these regulations is not economic, they still have economic consequences. For instance, *Forbes* calculated some years ago that the total cost of affirmative-action preferences was equal to something like 4 percent of gross domestic product. This is a massive sum; but it pales alongside the overall costs of environmental regulation.

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Clinton has been assiduous in defending universal moral regulation against political attack.

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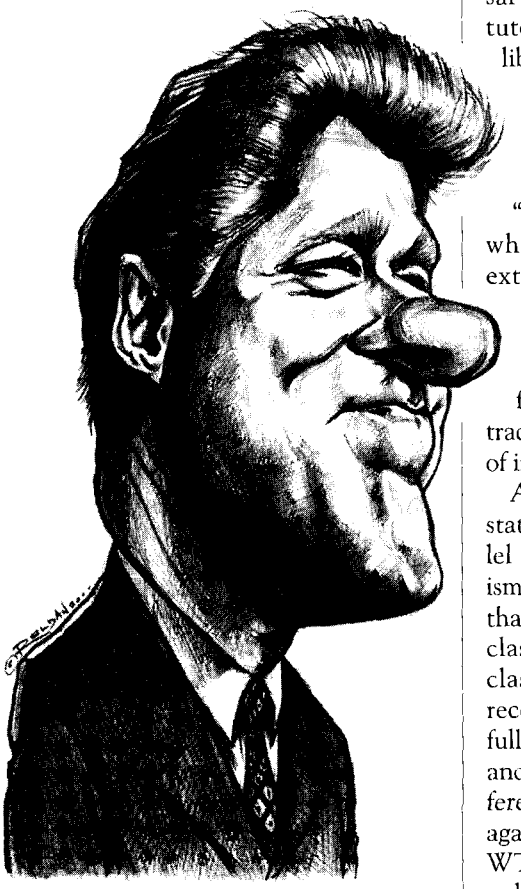

Bill Clinton by Ismael Roldan

And cost alone is not the most important issue. Moral regulation is an engine of social control. It enables government agencies to extend the values of the liberal bureaucracy into every section of society—thus, the armed forces are compelled to embrace feminist social theory, universities are forbidden to recruit and promote on intellectual merit and achievement, and orchestras cannot employ "blind auditions" lest they produce the wrong ethnic balance in the string section. In practice it is impossible to resist such state intrusion on private-sector decisions.

Some people seem to believe that these evils would be reduced if, for instance, a system of preferences based on poverty were to replace one based on race and gender. In fact, since poverty is itself a variable concept, such a system would allow government agencies to determine every hiring, firing, and promotion in the country. It would be socialism dressed up as an extended human-resources department. It is this potentially tyrannical system of universal moral regulation that now constitutes the main institution of modern liberalism.

And Clinton has been assiduous in defending it against political attack. In a cold legal climate, he has succeeded in neither "ending" nor "mending" affirmative action. Indeed, wherever possible, he has actually extended it. And that continues. His recent speeches at Seattle and in Third Way gatherings have proposed closing any escape hatches from overregulation by making free-trade agreements vehicles for new forms of international regulation.

Alongside this rise of the regulatory state, moreover, there has been a parallel social development. Statist liberalism used to be a form of class politics that defended the blue-collar working class against corporations and upper-class interests. Vice President Gore's recent rhetoric drew, not very successfully, on this tradition. But both Clinton and Gore in power have acted very differently. They took the side of business against labor on NAFTA and over the WTO; they recognized that labor's political power has been shrinking in the new economy; they saw the rise of an investor class that includes many blue-collar workers; and above all they have detected that some traditional "class constituencies," such as northern white ethnic voters, no longer lean leftwards. Other things being equal, liberal Democrats faced a gradual loss of political support on class lines.

What they have discovered is a replacement for class politics in the form of ethno-cultural politics. The Democratic party under Clinton has reinvent-

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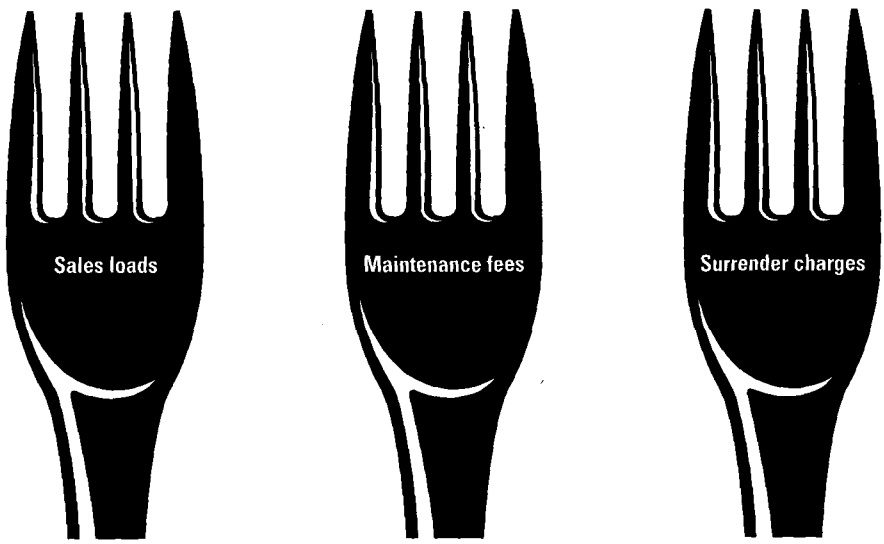

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ed itself as the party of a new multicultural America in which everyone belongs to some minority or other—blacks, Latinos, gays, "women" (i.e., feminists), even Euro-Americans, and so on—and in which politics consists of redistributing resources between different groups to maintain social harmony. In the beginning the Democrats largely blundered into such politics with the spread of racial preferences. These were originally adopted on welfare grounds, but in the event they both fostered race consciousness and gave the Democrats a call on the loyalty of their beneficiaries. The process has become more self-conscious under the Clinton presidency. Gore in particular employed immigration policy to increase the number (and numbers) of officially designated minorities likely to vote Democratic. And because assimilation and a common American culture might have reconstituted these various minorities into a single American nation, as happened earlier this century, the Democrats have encouraged minorities to retain their "authentic" culture and language. On several occasions, indeed, Clinton has explicitly rejected the notion of a common American culture. Here's one of his formulations: "Along with our founding, which was an act of genius, and the freeing of slaves in the Civil War and the long civil-rights movement, this will arguably be the third great revolution of America if we can prove that we literally can live without having a dominant European culture."

Of course, this maximizes the misunderstandings and hostilities that are always potentially present in ethnic difference—and which Clinton and the Democrats have been prepared to exploit come election time, or over controversies like the Asian fundraising scandal. For that very reason, however, it provides a further justification for the liberal politics of moral regulation, as government steps in to mediate between the various squabbling minorities, who—not being united in a single culture—cannot easily unite politically against Washington.

Multiculturalism is the liberals' version of "divide and rule." And it works. Indeed, the clearest sign of its success is that it has now been adopted by the Republican party. **NR**

■ COVER STORY III ■

Display Error

Clinton's emotional style

RICHARD LOWRY

ONE of the most characteristic Clinton moments was at one of the—roughly five—Ron Brown memorial services. A camera caught the president laughing after the ceremony, so—like a gunslinger reaching for his revolver—he produced a tear and wiped it away in a perfect, rapid-fire gesture of grief. Clinton could handle emotion the way Michael Jordan handled a basketball, with utter command, making it do things no one would have thought possible.

The Ron Brown tear was notable, of course, mostly for its falsity. It captured a seeming paradox of the Clinton years: that our most "emotionally open" president was also one of the least honest. But this isn't really a paradox. Instead it reflects one aspect of our confessional culture, which values openness but tends also to thrive on manipulation and make-believe, on manufactured sentiments that demonstrate the correctness of their bearer. Clinton was, in many ways, the representative man of our age: the empathetic liar.

The original untruth was, *I feel your pain*. Moral philosophers have long recognized the tricky nature of sympathy. One critic has written of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, "For Smith, acts of sympathy are structured by theatrical dynamics that (because of the impossibility of really knowing or entering into someone else's sentiments) depend on people's ability to represent themselves as tableaux, spectacles or texts before others." Clinton was a spectacle; the most important thing was never our pain, but the fact that he seemed, so ostentatiously, to feel it.

In the second presidential debate in 1992, Clinton was widely thought to have clinched the election with his answer to a woman's question about how the national debt affected her. President Bush stumbled in his reply, understandably not seeming to have any idea what the hell the woman was asking. Clinton stepped right up to her, and talked about his fellow-feeling for all the sufferers in the Bush recession. He made the question about himself, about his fine feelings—it became a matter of display.

This tendency to self-exposure is something we associate with honesty. At that moment in the debate, the thinking goes, the repressed Bush was presumably cut off from any feelings he may have had, while Clinton forthrightly testified to his. But there is little that we are less likely to be honest about than ourselves. It is much harder to lie about, say, GDP figures for the farm sector than subjective feelings. What Clinton probably was thinking during that woman's question was, *Here's a chance to bell my opponent, once and for all.*

Clinton was particularly good at soaking people in a warm bath of sentiment partly as a matter of personality, but also because of his southern Protestant background, which favors open expressions of faith that might make mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Jews wince. This testimonial style was absorbed by daytime talk shows, which secularized it—unhinging it from most stern moral strictures—and spread it wide throughout the land. So, there is something perfect about George W. Bush—like Clinton, a southern Protestant with a propensity to talk about his heart—explaining his personal faith in a misty-eyed interview with Oprah Winfrey.

As it happens, the drive toward openness in our culture coexists with a strong censorious streak, a kind of debased and politicized puritanism. Certain things just aren't said, certain jokes not laughed at, certain attitudes not permitted—most of them involving race or any sort of judgmentalism. The last thing we want is for John Rocker to be open about his feelings for passengers on the 7 train. And he won't be admitted back to the family of man until he (preferably tearfully) confesses his hurt at having expressed such hurtful views.

So, the emotional openness in our cul-

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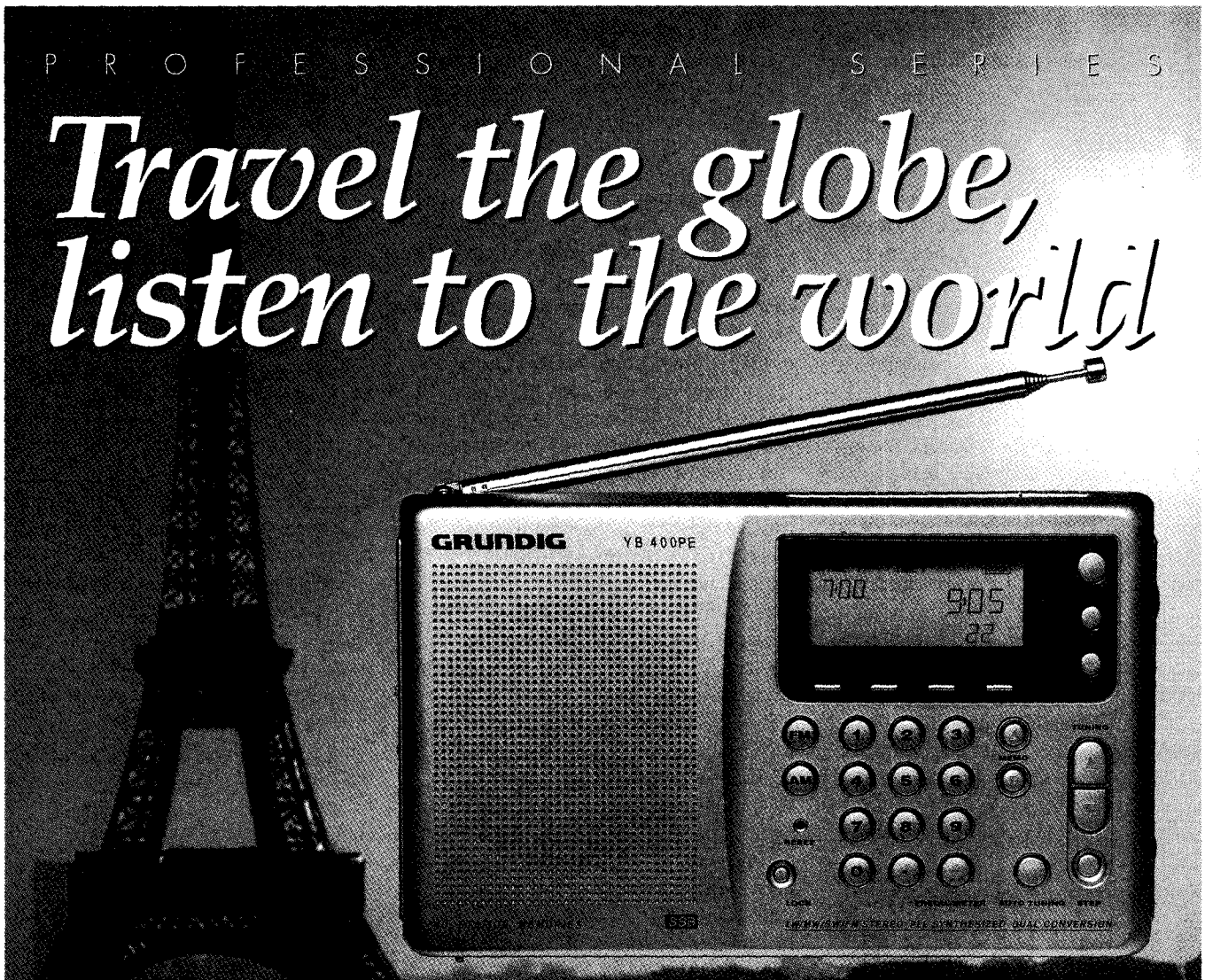

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ture tends to run in one direction, and become a matter of playacting. Take those intense episodes of exposure that dot daytime television. Never before have ordinary people told strangers so much about themselves that is so embarrassing. Then again, they often aren't quite ordinary people, but semiprofessionals—or, at least, participants in on the joke—producing the confessions necessary to drive story lines in which the villains are always Klansmen or heartless sluts.

Clinton was a high-toned version of those daytime-talk-show guests, letting it all hang out, so long as it served the story line. The court of Louis XIV depended on a façade to maintain a sense of majesty and mystery, Clinton's presidency on a sort of anti-façade to create an aura of informality and openness. But both depended on their own kind of artifice, which is why, after having been elected in 1992 as the most "real" candidate for president—and telling us everything that he has thought and felt over the last eight years, seeming to hide nothing—Clinton has still left the public hungry for authenticity.

In retrospect, two things should have been predictable if Clinton were to have an affair in the White House: First, it would be exposed, and we would know about it down to every last footnote, because his attitude, and the spirit of the age, are so corrosive of the idea of privacy (although he had plenty of help from the independent-counsel law). Second, that he wouldn't confess, at least not to what mattered. Clinton is willing to tell us everything—about his feelings, about his underwear—everything but that he lied in the Paula Jones suit. Because *that* would be an unflattering confession.

Instead of telling the truth, Clinton apologized, over and over. The apology was a kind of self-abasement, a way of feeling his own pain, of making out of himself such a spectacle that he would escape any other judgment: *Qui s'accuse s'excuse*. In Clinton's Washington, this apology without consequence became the coin of the realm. It was enough to feel bad, or appear to feel bad, to "take responsibility" for any mishap or malfeasance, and then blithely "move on."

The confessional culture tends to make standards for judgment subjective and personal. There is a selfishness at its core—and, of course, at Clinton's as well. His solipsism (with his own private meanings for words), his onanism, his extraordinary wish that the country could have been plunged into a crisis so he could improve *his* legacy, all depended on the notion that there was nothing—no people, no standards—outside himself that he need respect. This is why duty and sacrifice, which depend on devotion to things higher than self, are words that will never be associated with Clinton.

And neither will honesty, something buried among all the supposed self-revelations. We just know, and were told, too much. When Joe DiMaggio, an icon of a bygone reserve, famously kicked at the dirt around second base during one World Series game, you could be sure that he was *really pissed*. Clinton's promiscuous emotional gestures had no such spare starkness. Or, you could be sure that Calvin Coolidge wasn't lying to you when he wasn't saying anything, when he wasn't feeling compelled to make self-aggrandizing claims about the purity of his inner self. Clinton, for eight years, did little else. **NR**

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■ COVER STORY IV ■

Little Man

Clinton's dubious achievement

MARK STEYN

So this is it. Bill Clinton's long goodbye is about to reach, for want of a better word, completion. Some of us would have preferred it if he'd reached it a few years back, but he managed to keep a couple of jumps ahead of us—passing Go, collecting another $200 from some dodgy Chinaman, renting out his big hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, landing on Monica's Community Chest, but always turning up a "Get out of Jail Free" card. It seems scarcely possible that we're finally coming to the end of "this journey we're on," as he called it during one of his mid-1998 public confessionals with a few dozen of his thousands of "spiritual advisers"—a journey, in case you've forgotten, to get to "the rock-bottom truth of where I am and where we all are."

And where we are, he is: *L'état, c'est lui*. A couple of years back, I was on some panel or other with Andrew Ferguson of *The Weekly Standard*, who remarked that he'd been wrong to conclude early on that Clinton was not important and not a large figure. I think that's half-right. We like to say, of most leaders, that they grow in office. Not Bill Clinton. Instead, he shrank the office to fit him, and, in some ways, shrank the country, too. If he seems a large figure, it's mainly because he pushed himself up against the lens—just as on the now-famous *Esquire* open-legged cover shot his "distinguishing characteristics" also loom large. "They have no idea what we went through to save this marriage," he told Susan Estrich recently, "how hard we've

Mr. Steyn is a columnist for Britain's *Daily Telegraph* and Canada's *National Post*.

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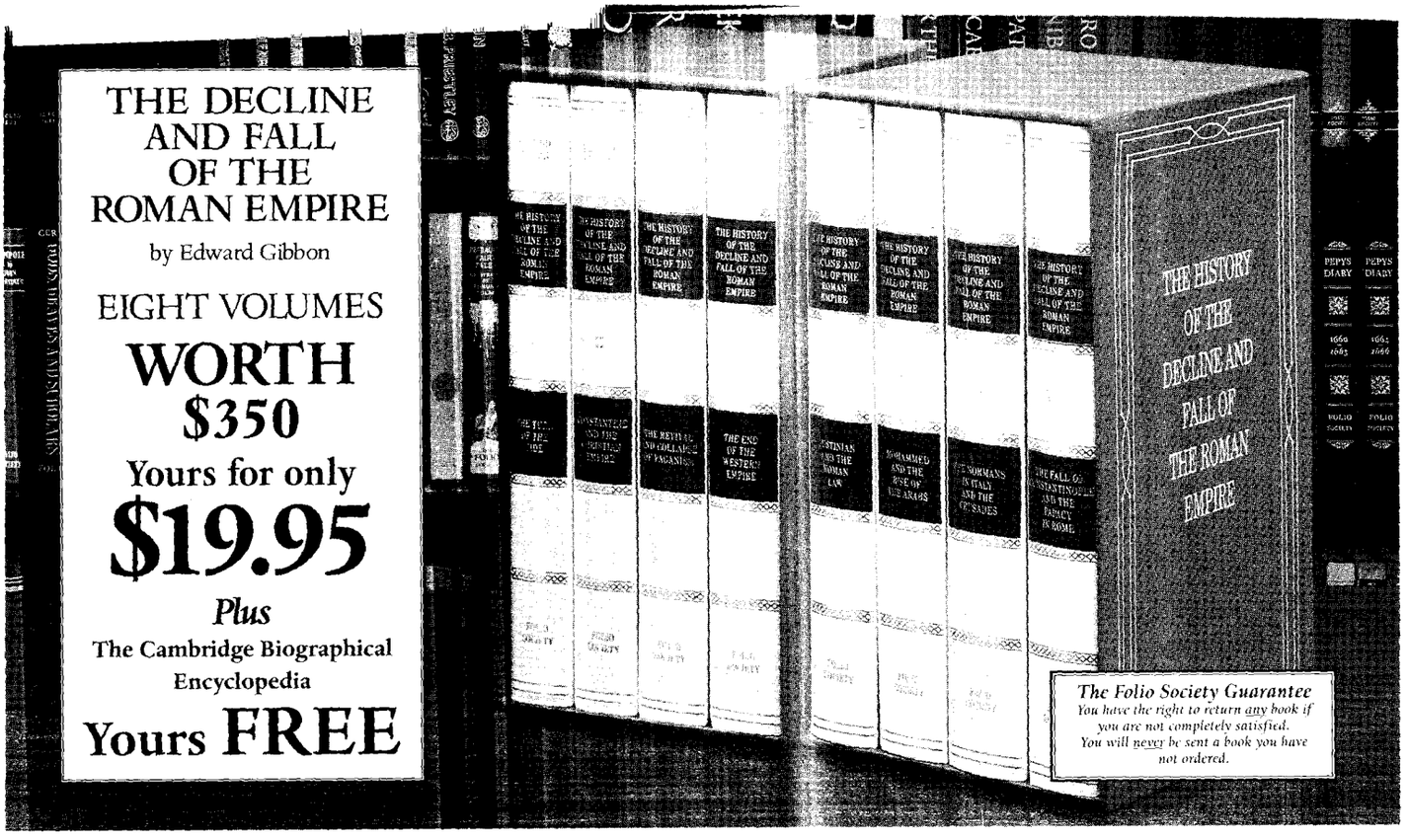
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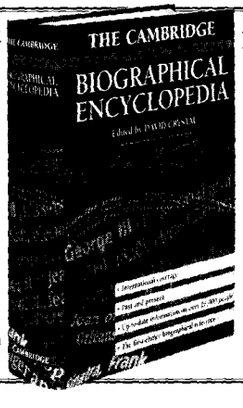

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worked to save it. Or perhaps how important it was that we did . . . not just for the country, but for the two of us." Not "just" for the country: In *The Bill Clinton Show*, government was a backdrop, a pretext, the MacGuffin, as Hitchcock called it; but not really what the story was about, in the same way that *Dynasty* wasn't really about the mysterious "pipeline" that Blake and Alexis Carrington were forever feuding and fighting and buying up stock options over, but only the extramarital sex it provoked.

In political terms, he wasn't large at all. Republicans will never get a better Democrat in the White House than Bill Clinton. His cheerleaders in the press gleefully hailed him as a genius: According to them, he stole all the GOP's most popular policies and then tagged them as extremists for sticking with the handful he hadn't bothered purloining. This argument would have more merit applied to Britain's Tony Blair or Canada's Jean Chrétien, both of whom ran in Tory clothes and came close to wiping out their countries' respective Conservative parties. But the funny thing about Bill Clinton is that his move to the center came without any political benefits for his party: Everywhere you look—the state legislatures, the governors' mansions, the U.S. House and Senate—there are now far more Republicans than there were in 1992. Sen. Bob Smith said after the impeachment trial that Clinton "won. He always wins." True; but he only wins for Clinton. That's why Clinton's Democratic party has been great for Clinton, terrible for the party. Round about the time you read this, some Democrats, blinking into the daylight like drunks staggering from an all-night bender, will be beginning to realize this. But that's the Clinton era: In the immortal words of Whitney Houston, learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all.

■

The funny thing about Clinton is that his move to the center came without any political benefits for his party.

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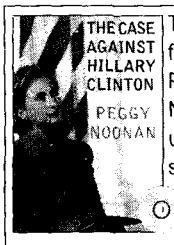
So it makes sense to discuss him not in political terms, but cultural ones. He was our first black president, according to Toni Morrison; and our first gay president, according to himself, suggesting to a gay interviewer that gays supported him because impeachment was the political equivalent of a homophobic hate crime; he was also our first Indian president, telling a disgruntled Cherokee during his interminable "national conversation on race" that he shared the guy's reservations—if only metaphorically—because he too was part Cherokee, America's Big Chief Talking Bull, the Washington Redskin. He was the first president to compare himself to Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Jesus Christ. He was the first president to talk about himself. He was AM 1600 WJC—All Me, All the Time.

He was the first president to appear on TV with a "Sexually Graphic Material" network warning slapped across his chest as he played Clarence Darrow to Ken Starr's William Jennings Bryan in the Scope of the Monkey Business Trial. "If the deponent is the person who has oral sex performed on him, then the contact is . . . not with anything on that list, but with the lips of another person," he said. "It seems to me self-evident that that's what it is. . . . Let me remind you, sir, I read this carefully." He was the first deponent in the Oval Office. His was the first First Penis to have an official statement issued on its behalf, following its formal examination by Captain Kevin O'Connell of the National Naval Medical Center as Exhibit A in Paula Jones's sexual-harassment suit. He was the first president to issue updates on his sex life: As the First Lady's chief of staff, Melanne Verveer, put it last year: "We've slowly seen a physical passion come back into their lives"—or, in other words, Air Force One is back in the hangar. He was the first boomer to discover that making love and making war are not necessarily incompatible. The First Couple's dormant sexual relationship was rekindled by their late-night discussions during the NATO strikes against Milosevic. So, if it's any consolation to those bombed-out Serb rail commuters, Chinese-embassy employees, and Kosovo refugee convoys, the earth moved for Bill and Hill, too.

He was the first president to have a Sarah McLachlan CD on the Oval Office desk, according to footnote 707 of the Starr Report, a letter from Monica to Bill: "While I was hiding out in your office for a half-hour I noticed you had the new Sarah McLachlan CD. I have it, too, and it's wonderful. Whenever I listen to song #5 I think of you."

"Do What You Have to Do," sings Sarah on Bill and Monica's "song #5." But what was it that Bill Clinton had to do? He told his fellow citizens repeatedly that he needed to "get back to work for the American people." But he had time to listen to the new Sarah McLachlan CD; time to have 90-minute phone-sex sessions; time to lead Monica gently into the outer office, after informing her that regrettably their love could never be, and join her in a duet of "Try a Little Tenderness." He had time to watch Harrison Ford in *Air Force One*, twice. He had time to play golf with Vernon Jordan, and golf with Michael Jordan, and golf with any other Jordan willing to pony up, and time to swing by Greg Norman's pad, not to play golf but to fall down the stairs. He had time to listen to Kenny G.

Most of us assume that if, like Monica, we ever got to rummage around the president's desk for half an hour, we'd at least stumble across some IMF Russian bailout proposals or a NATO plan to bomb Saddam. We would, frankly, be disappointed to press the nuclear-strike button and find it just cranked up the new Jewel CD. But the Cold War is over, and while, in the new Cool War, the president was not cool but cheesy, he did nonetheless know



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the tricks of the trade: for example, cracking up when Boris Yeltsin said something flaky, like Buddy Hackett yukking it up with Danny Thomas at a Friars Club roast. He understood the crude show-biz rule that if you behave like a star, you'll get treated like one, a theory that reached its apotheosis in his entrance at the Democratic convention, the sort of thing Nicolae Ceausescu might have done if he'd ever seen Wayne Newton.

But he was never a star. He failed to win a majority of the vote in 1992, and in 1996 sneaked in again in a three-way race against a dud Republican with the lowest turnout since women's suffrage. He maintained his high "job approval" ratings because he never did anything that didn't come preapproved: Supposedly the most masterful politician of his generation, he never once risked expending any political capital by trying to persuade the American people of the merits of anything they didn't already agree with. George Bush the elder, the despised, out-of-touch stiff, managed to turn around a reluctant public into full-throated support of the Gulf War. That was beyond Clinton. All he could do was tell us he was indispensable, despite a mountain of evidence to the contrary.

And now that most of the vast legions of FOBs are either dead, in jail, or drowning in legal bills, now that Monica has done diet ads, now that the famous blue dress has entered the witness-protection program and following reconstructive surgery is living quietly as a pair of curtains in Des Moines, now that it's all nearing completion, what's left? Alan Greenspan. Republican governors. Cigar jokes.

Celebrity, unlike fame, requires a living presence—look at the ever dwindling numbers of the groupies of the Princess of Wales—and although, in 2043, President Buttafuoco will only be the same age as his fellow, er, ladies' man Strom Thurmond is now, I suspect he'll have difficulty holding our attention. He will always be there, the DNA stain on the Constitution; but the American people—including the Democratic party—will shrug him off. He will, as always, be hungry for love. But from now on he'll find that we're the ones who won't reciprocate. **NR**

■ **POLITICS** ■

The Last Straw Poll

Seven things from Campaign 2000 to eliminate

KATE O'BEIRNE

BEFORE the reform-minded spirit of this year's campaign gives way to the practical realities of governing, the most irritating features of the 2000 presidential race should be noted and reformed out of existence. Any "not to do" list for the next slate of White House contenders should include the Iowa straw poll, the New Hampshire primary along with open primaries in other states, the Commission on Presidential Debates, focus groups of "undecided" voters, tracking polls, and "ad watches" by media referees.

Iowa's greedy GOP takes two big bites of the nomination apple by conducting a **straw poll** that candidates typically dare not ignore. Because the media join the hype, this fundraising stunt can shrink the field of candidates a full year before the party's convention. Happily, John McCain's atypical campaign benefited by ignoring this season's straw poll, as well as the state's January caucus. Conventional hindsight holds that Bill Bradley should also have headed straight to New Hampshire. If Iowa's loss in the political marketplace prompts future candidates to follow McCain's strategy, the caucuses will no longer test the field, and reporters will be spared spending January in Des Moines—and August in Ames.

This year, **New Hampshire** again failed its own political marketplace test. John McCain enjoyed a huge win in New Hampshire that bore no relation to how he fared in later primaries. Four years ago, Pat Buchanan was unable to duplicate his success in the Granite State. Why should New Hampshire continue to enjoy its preeminent status when the state has become the "Worst in the Nation" at picking GOP nominees? The disproportionate attention paid to New Hampshire voters—demonstrated by the tiresome quadrennial jokes about locals being undecided because they had only met a certain candidate five times—has made them too obnoxiously self-aware to provide a valid test of candidates. With independents free to vote in the GOP primary in numbers that outstrip registered Republicans, the state's voters now just seem to enjoy letting challengers without broad party appeal rough up the GOP frontrunner.

All of the other state parties ought to restrict their primaries to party members. When independents and Democrats vote in **open primaries** (like those in Michigan), the results don't represent the nominee party members favor. Agnostics who reject the creed shouldn't dilute the will of the party faithful. The media fawns over "thoughtful" nonaligned voters, but political partisans who are informed and engaged on the issues are the most responsible members of the electorate, and the parties should be doing everything possible to encourage party membership.

This year it became clear that the **Commission on Presidential Debates** has gotten too big for its bipartisan britches. The Commission has been hosting the face-offs since 1988, when its bossy predecessor, the League of Women Voters, refused to modify its debate demands to suit Vice President Bush. In January, the Commission announced the number, dates, sites, and times for the fall debates. In June, it dictated the lengths and the single-moderator format. When George W. Bush had the temerity to suggest alternative debate forums, he found that the private bipartisan group had achieved some weirdly official status that had the unprecedented effect of preventing any modifications by the candidates. (As recently as 1996, Bill Clinton got away with debating only twice.) So, in the high-stakes debates, Jim Lehrer alone decided every question posed, even screening those offered by the "undecided" Missouri voters the Commission had rounded up. Since 1976, the leading presidential candidates have taken part in nationally televised general-election debates, and voter expectations will

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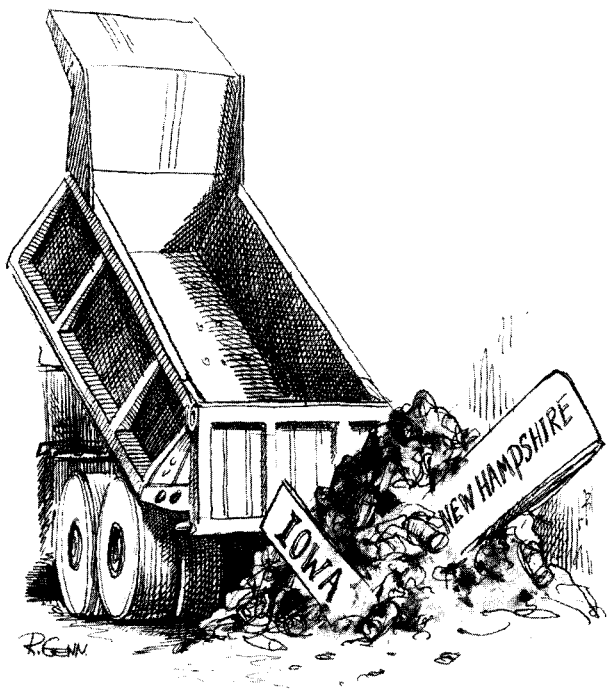
ensure that candidates debate in 2004—without the Commission.

The tiresome, predictable **undecided voters** at the Missouri town-hall debate did fairly represent the ill-informed, detached voters whose views the media examined ad nauseam this season. Basking in the TV lights, these debate watchers invariably told Wolf that they were still torn between candidates who hadn't yet matched their own precise positions on education, health care, or the environment. Maybe if they weren't so busy being interviewed, they could watch the news, read a newspaper, or check a website to find out everything they'd care to know about candidates who broadly reflect the philosophical positions their parties have represented for the past 40 years.

With so many of this year's **polls** embarrassingly inaccurate, let's hope the media and their pollsters enter a trial separation. Over one recent four-day period, Gallup's tracking poll found a 15 point swing in the presidential candidates' support, which commentators gamely tried to attribute to some development or other on the campaign trail. Of course, there had been no such wild fluctuation, but the four frequently contradictory national polls that were in the field during October drove media coverage in the campaigns' final weeks. Polling expert Karlyn Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute is dismayed with the attention paid to every purported blip in polls; it makes the poll numbers appear much more precise than they really are. She notes that one study found that about 25 percent of voters don't firmly make up their minds until the last two weeks of the campaign. "These polls are often probing opinions that are nonexistent," Bowman explains. She recalls that the first question about the 2000 race was asked in 1995, attempting to measure the support Colin Powell would enjoy should he elect to run. Before the Iowa caucuses this year, there had been 1,000 polling questions on the presidential race. And the daily bombardment won't end because the campaigns are over. Rasmussen Research has announced that "for the first time in history, the new president will have his approval ratings measured every day." Stop them before they poll again.

Finally, media **"ad watches"** should stick to policing the intentionally false accusations made against candidates, such as being complicit in the death of a nursing-home resident or opposing research on breast cancer, rather than nitpicking the typical campaign fare. One ad analysis in the *New York Times* complained that Bush's claims about his education record were "selective and broad." Imagine that: "selective and broad" statements in a political TV commercial! Another *Times* ad analysis faulted a Republican TV spot that mentioned the Buddhist temple for ignoring Al Gore's admission that he was "an imperfect messenger" on campaign-finance reform. The ad was said to represent "a certain desperation" on the part of Republicans. Does that sound like an objective judgment?

With the 2004 campaign season beginning on November 8, 2000, it's not too soon to start getting rid of these irritants. **NR**



By Roman Genn

■ THE MILITARY ■

Do-goodism Gone Bad

The lesson of the U.S.S. *Cole*

ANDREW J. BACEVICH

THE attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* underlines a key problem with U.S. defense policy: For almost a decade, we have deferred the basic—and necessary—reassessment of the role of U.S. military power in a post–Cold War world.

Senior U.S. civilian and military officials are doing their level best to avert any such reassessment. If they get their way, the *Cole* incident will remain simply a tragedy—the unwarranted death of 17 American heroes—instead of being recognized for its broader significance, as yet another glaring piece of evidence exposing the defects of U.S. national-security policy.

U.S. officials have described the attack on the *Cole* as a "vicious and cowardly act" (Secretary of Defense William Cohen) and a "senseless act of terrorism" (Adm. Vern Clark). In explaining the *Cole*'s presence in Aden, President Clinton asserted that the American destroyer was "simply . . . standing guard for peace."

As sentiments intended to ease the pain of grieving families, these comments are understandable. But as a serious characterization of the incident, they are disingenuous. The real purpose of such language is to obfuscate, concealing the true nature of America's place in the world today and the role that U.S. forces are now playing. It also diverts the attention of American citizens from the flaws in our national-security strategy.

To begin with, the attack on the *Cole* was not "cowardly." Rather it was an

Mr. Bacevich is a professor of international relations at Boston University.

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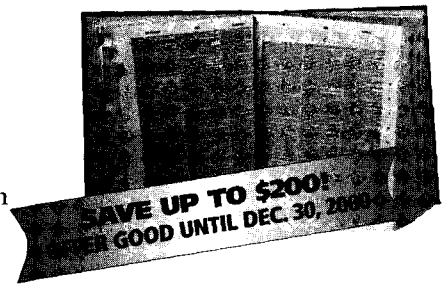

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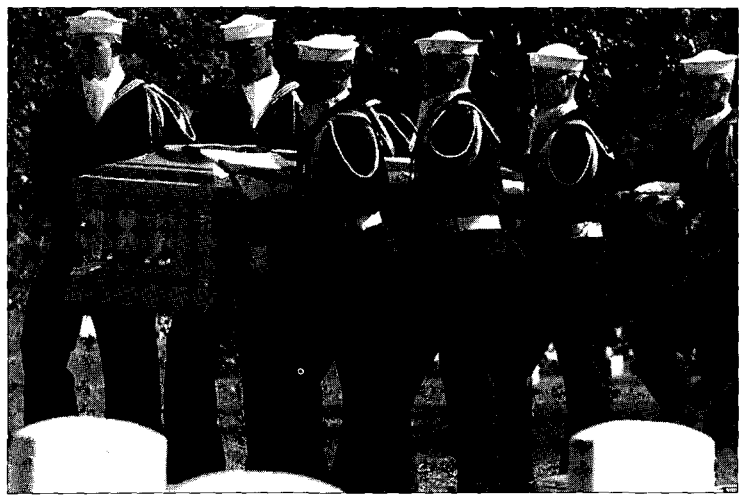
expression of extraordinary determination, courage, and animus directed against the United States, its policies, and its values. Nor was the attack "senseless." It reflected, instead, a shrewd and calculated assessment of the most effective way of exploiting the vulnerabilities of a high-tech superpower. Nor should the presence of the *Cole* in Aden be understood simply as a matter of innocently "standing guard for peace." A destroyer is a warship, not a peaceship. American troops garrison the Persian Gulf—as they do large parts of Asia and Europe—to advance a variety of substantive U.S. interests. Where such interests do not exist—for example, in most of Africa—the U.S. military presence is minimal, and our devotion to peace little more than rhetorical.

The truth is that in the aftermath of the Cold War, in regions where it has important interests at stake, the U.S. has assumed quasi-imperial responsibilities. That it has done so reflects not providence or happenstance but the conscious choice of U.S. policymakers, a choice tacitly endorsed across the political spectrum with the exception of the far Left and the isolationist Right. As a corollary to that choice, the American military establishment has become the chief instrument through which the U.S. attempts to fulfill those responsibilities. Without a formal name change, the Department of Defense has become a Department of Power Projection.

Although many (perhaps most) members of the officer corps cling to the notion that the armed forces exist to "fight and win the nation's wars," that is military nostalgia. True, the services must remain ready to engage in wars. But their day-to-day responsibilities—in the Persian Gulf, the Balkans, and elsewhere—have come, over the past decade, to resemble those of a global military constabulary. Their function more closely resembles policing than war-fighting.

The attack on the *Cole* occurred as a consequence of U.S. forces assuming that role. This doesn't mean that the U.S. should shrug off the incident as simply part of the cost of doing business; indeed, if the U.S. intends its fiat to be taken seriously, then tracking down and punishing those who organized or ordered the attack—and thereby demonstrating the inevitable consequence of trifling with American lives—becomes all the more important. President Clinton is right to remind the world that America's memory and its reach are long. (Although one would note that despite similar pronouncements following the Khobar Towers attack in 1996, the U.S. still has not identified the perpetrators; and although the Clinton administration blamed Osama bin Laden for the 1998 bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa, retaliation in that instance failed to reach bin Laden and resulted only in embarrassment, when U.S. cruise missiles destroyed a Sudanese pharmaceutical factory that had no connection to terrorism. In punishing terrorists, the Clinton administration has done better on talk than on action.)



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More than a tragedy

In truth, *some* soldiers have embraced the imperial function, with gusto. Gen. Wesley Clark, chief architect of the ill-conceived Kosovo war, is one of them. Another is Gen. Anthony Zinni, the just-retired commander in chief (CINC) of U.S. Central Command and the architect of the program of ship visits to Yemen. Even when on active duty, Zinni referred openly to the CINCs as the new "proconsuls." A recent series of articles by Dana Priest of the *Washington Post* indicated that the CINCs have largely displaced the State Department as regional power brokers.

But is the mandate that these proconsuls have claimed for themselves the correct one? Is it strategically sound?

According to the Pentagon's own doctrine, a core mission of the post–Cold War military is to "shape the environment." The idea, Secretary Cohen explains, is "to shape people's opinions about us in ways that are favorable to us. To shape events that will affect our livelihood and our security. And we can do that when people see us, they see our power, they see our professionalism, they see our patriotism, and they say, that's a country that we want to be with."

U.S. military commanders attempt to "shape the environment" through such tactics as military-to-military contacts, ship visits, equipment transfers, training missions, and exercises that are supposed to win friends and influence for the U.S. These measures have become increasingly important over the last decade; indeed, the *Cole* was sent to Aden not because it was the only port that had fuel available, but because Zinni had decided that—in his own words—"we needed to do more engagement" in Yemen.

The U.S. has paid a heavy penalty for Zinni's misguided attempt to curry favor with the Yemeni government. But this is not the only failure of this particular proconsul; far more disturbing, but garnering far less attention, has been the policy that Zinni has pursued with respect to Iraq. While presiding over Central Command, Zinni did not disguise his disdain for proposals that the U.S. seek to remove Saddam Hussein. But the alternative Zinni prefers—ineffective economic sanctions accompanied by a desultory bombing campaign—has done nothing to impede Saddam's progress toward ending his decade-long diplomatic isolation; today, it's the U.S. that finds itself increasingly isolated, and its efforts to contain Iraq conspicuously failing. Even as Americans were preoccupied with the *Cole*, Saddam was ostentatiously flexing his muscles: exercising his mechanized forces near the Jordanian

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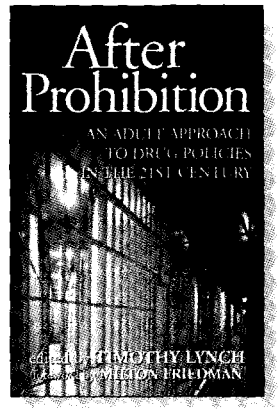
border, dispatching a convoy of matériel to express Iraqi solidarity with the Palestinians, and threatening Israel with missile attack. None of these actions elicited a discernible U.S. response.

But the problem is no more Zinni himself than it is the other four-star proconsuls who preside over Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific, all of them engaged in the relentless pursuit of "more engagement." Nor does the problem lie with State Department or White House do-gooders engaging in foreign-policy-as-social-work. The real problem lies with prevailing U.S. views about the benefits to be derived from our possession of superior military power. Juxtaposing the unhappy fate of the U.S.S. *Cole* against Iraq's steady reemergence as a regional threat highlights the central defect of current national-security doctrine: It encourages commanders to busy themselves with winning hearts and minds, instead of focusing on preparing their forces to crack heads as needed to restore order, maintain stability, and enforce minimum norms of international behavior.

The conviction that U.S. military dominance endows American soldiers with a capacity to court others to "be with" us betrays a profound cultural arrogance, hardly different from the hubris that persuades Bill Clinton that sufficient charm, cajolery, and arm-twisting can persuade most anyone to make peace. Clinton's hubris is based on an illusion, and its result—evident in the Middle East—is diplomatic failure, with others left to pay the consequences. But for America's uniformed proconsuls, the result is likely to be far more dire: It makes possible the kind of surprise that occurred in the port of Aden. In the meantime, Saddam Hussein, untended, grows stronger and ever more confident.

Placing the *Cole* incident in its proper context—seeing it not as a cowardly, senseless attack on peacekeepers but as part of an ongoing challenge to U.S. power—exposes as fanciful the reigning precepts of Pentagon strategy. The key now is to restore a sense of realism to U.S. military policy, and that requires questioning the imperial presumption that places warships like the U.S.S. *Cole* in unnecessary danger in the first place. **NR**

What Happens after Prohibition?



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—Milton Friedman

"I think the facts boil down to drugs being a bad choice. Drugs are a handicap. But should someone go to jail for just doing drugs? I believe the time has come for that to end."

—Gary Johnson
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After Prohibition: An Adult Approach to Drugs in the 21st Century edited by Timothy Lynch. Foreword by Milton Friedman. Available in fine bookstores or at www.cato.org. 185 pp./$18.95 cloth/$9.95 paper.

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■ CULTURE WATCH ■

The End of the Ectomorph

What happened to the skinny male?

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

For me, one of the abiding impressions of this recent election campaign has been Al Gore's sternocleidomastoid muscles. Remember the sternocleidomastoids? They were introduced to us by Tom Wolfe in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. One of the characters in that novel was an ambitious young district attorney who was exceptionally proud of these features of his anatomy. He used them for purposes of mating display, supposing that they made him irresistible to women; and he flexed them in courtroom situations to intimidate witnesses. I thought Tom Wolfe had just made up the sternocleidomastoids; but when I checked in *Gray's Anatomy*, there they were on page 318, running from the clavicle up the side of the neck to the mastoid process behind the ear. Al Gore's are particularly well-developed. They came out very well in the debates, each time he drew in his chin and looked down to check his notes or to do some "*Oh, come on!*" body language.

But you need a little restraint in working out the sternocleidomastoids, especially in politics. If they are too buff, they make your head look smaller than your neck. You are then a guy with a small head—not necessarily the impression a candidate wants to convey. Contrariwise, failure to pay attention to the sternocleidomastoids risks the pencil-neck-geek look, even more to be avoided. It is so difficult to get these things right nowadays, when our expectations of the male body have all been ratcheted upwards by the modern cult of "working out." It is inconceivable that a man as fat as William Howard Taft, or one as lean as John Tyler (to judge from the Healy portrait), could attain high office in the present age. In matters of physiognomy, at least, "diversity" is out. We want either a regular mesomorph or the pumped-up version, a Bush or a Gore, a Clinton or a Jesse Ventura.

When did it all start? When did ordinary, nonathletic middle-class folk start joining gyms? At which point did "lats," "traps," "quads," "glutes," and "pecs" enter the common vocabulary? When did men start to bother so much about the shape of their bodies? Around 1975, that's when. Early signals were Charles Gaines's 1972 novel *Stay Hungry* and the rise to movie stardom of bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger (*Pumping Iron*, 1977) and seriously buff Sylvester Stallone (*Rocky*, 1976).

Gore's sternocleidomastoids by Roman Genn

Prior to that, bodybuilding was generally perceived as a freak cult practiced by men of ambiguous sexuality. There was some leakage into mainstream culture, principally through boxing and the movies (Sean Connery was a bodybuilder in his youth, though in the more modest pre-steroid style of the 1940s). For the most part, though, bodybuilders were out on the fringe. No ordinary man of 1960 knew the names of any muscles other than biceps. Gyms were for athletes and boxers, not office workers. Skinny boys were encouraged to "bulk up" by their fathers and by peer pressure, but many did not bother, and male ectomorphs were a common sight in American streets and workplaces. It was even possible for an ectomorph to be a TV or movie star: With the passing of Jimmy Stewart, Tony Randall is now the last surviving specimen.

The last 25 years have seen the American male ectomorph slip into near extinction. Jockeys and long-distance runners still need to be lean, but male scrawniness is now otherwise transgressive. The wilder kinds of pop stars can still be skinny: Patrons of certain members-only websites will have noticed that in most respects Tommy Lee, sometime husband of Pamela, is significantly underendowed. In the movies, psychopaths and mean hillbillies can be skinny. Outside these offbeat zones, if you want to be thought normal: Bulk up, guys.

You do not, of course, have to go the full Schwarzenegger route. If you do, in fact, you run the risk of making yourself ridiculous. Not every personality type can carry excess muscle mass. I worked in the offices of a large company with a man who must have spent all his free time at the gym. He was bursting out of his suit. His sternocleidomastoid muscles could have held up the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. Like those of the gamekeeper in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, "his arms completely filled his sleeves." (D. H. Lawrence was the Tom Wolfe of his day, unusually attentive to male body shape. After seeing the ectomorphic philosopher Bertrand Russell in a bathing suit, he noted: "Poor Bertie—he's all disembodied mind!") Unfortunately, my colleague had a rather peevish, prickly personality. This was not altogether a disadvantage in his particular line of work—he was an auditor—but the combination of abrasive manner and over-developed physique caused everyone to snicker at him behind his back.

Women especially, I noticed. Excess musculature counts for nothing in the mating game, as any psychologist will tell you. *Ceteris paribus*, women like a trim mesomorph, a Tom Cruise or a Robert Redford; there is no value-added to any development above that—none, at any rate, worth half as much as a modest self-assurance or a

Mr. Derbyshire is a contributing editor of National Review.

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cheerful sense of humor. Pop psychology hints that an overdeveloped man may be "insecure" or "compensating"—negatives for a first impression with the opposite sex. Bulk up, guys, but know when to stop. Women who praise muscle mass generally have some ulterior motive; like Eleanor Clift describing Clinton-Gore in 1992 as "the all-beefcake ticket"—fair enough in the case of Gore, but a stretch for Clinton, the least physically impressive president since Richard Nixon.

In fact, for all the talk, working out has probably remained as much as ever a young guy's hobby. It is plain from the illustrations—unchanged for decades, and now transplanted intact onto the Internet—that the ads for Charles Atlas courses are targeted chiefly at 16-year-olds. Once out of their 20s and cumbered with life's larger responsibilities, most men become indifferent to their body shape. Ectomorphs who bulked up at school or college allow their hard-won muscle to turn to flab; mesomorphs go pear-shaped; endomorphs swell into gross obesity. The results can be seen in any gathering of nonelite Americans—people, I mean, who cannot afford a live-in personal trainer. Their patron saint is Francis of Assisi, who, on his deathbed, apologized to his body, which he addressed as "poor donkey," for the burdens he had heaped on it.

This does not, of course, help the public man. (I am not slighting women by ignoring them here; it is just that the social and political implications of their body shapes need another, much larger, article all to themselves.) However pear-shaped the nation, we shall not any time soon vote ourselves a pear-shaped chief executive, nor again flock to our movie theaters to see a dramatic lead shaped like Jimmy Stewart or Orson Welles. It is not so much that we have become a narcissistic people. If we had, gyms would be commoner than gas stations and McDonald's would be out of business. It is more that we expect narcissism in our leaders and dream-idols; we expect them to undergo the pains we are not willing to endure ourselves.

The cult of exercise, the end of promiscuous smoking and drinking, and also, increasingly, the availability of cosmetic surgery, have given our society a beauty elite of entertainers and personalities more numerous and more flawless than any we have had before. Their omnipresence has changed our psyches, adding anxieties and frustrations, altering our expectations of all public persons. There has always been a *Golden Bough* factor in the public life even of this rational republic—a belief that our leaders, as well as being honest and capable, should be representative of health and fertility, too. This factor is now, I think, stronger than ever. We should resist this tendency for all sorts of reasons. Not only is it a reversion to more primitive notions of leadership; let us also remember that Hollywood, the heartland of narcissism, beauty, and buff, also has the nation's highest concentration of gross political error. **NR**

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■ ESSAY ■

Will There Always Be an England?

Blair's 'Project' and the fate of a nation

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

TONY BLAIR will be remembered as the most willfully damaging prime minister Britain has ever had. During his three years in office, he has ceaselessly tinkered with the social and political arrangements in place, to upset or cancel them out of all recognition, and so drain of meaning much that gave the British their sense of identity. Nothing is too big to be safe from his fiddling, nothing is too small to escape his attention. There is an awful lot of ruin in a country, as we know, but Blair has induced a great deal of it, and promises more. Not since the Lord Protector Cromwell has there been anything like it.

If Blair were a bad man, really a second Cromwell bent on civil war, it would be far easier to deal with him. But he is not. Born in 1953, educated privately at one of the best and most expensive schools in the country, a lawyer and now a family man, outwardly he has the background and manner of a conventional sort of quasi-upper-class chap, a likely Conservative, out to do his best for everyone with a good strong dash of team spirit. Just before he was elected, however, he gave a description of the inner self: "I am a modern man. I am part of the rock-and-roll generation: the Beatles, color TV—that's the generation I come from."

A standard Sixties child, in other words, at the mercy of every one of the clichés of that time. Too ambitious really to drop out, keen to continue enjoying the privileges that derive from birth and upbringing, like many others in this bind he tries to atone by being a socialist. How cool. In the first flush of his political career, Blair advocated unilateral disarmament, appeasement of the Soviet Union, and a full socialist program for Britain. He has a belief that he knows everything worth knowing, that the past is a pointless rubbish dump, and now is now, let it all hang out. Amiably and effortlessly shallow, he is unfazed by his own ignorance and aglow with an absolute sense of his own virtue. He cannot imagine that he might be unpopular or wrong. The grin on his face is perpetual, and his eyes roll with self-righteous fervor. The satirical magazine *Private Eye* brilliantly mocks him as the Reverend Tony, the ruthless but mealy-mouthed vicar of the parish of "St Albion." Caught red-handed accepting a million-pound donation to his party from a tycoon in return for a financial favor, Blair almost sobbed with sincerity, "I'm a pretty straight kind of guy." So he is, so he is. Rich with humbug and smugness, the worldview of the Sixties is now let loose upon Britain.

Terrible Tony by David Smith

MAN ON A MISSION

Blair is not to blame for the Sixties that made him the empty shell he is. Long-drawn historical processes have been at work. Europe, its civilization and its values, is evidently exhausted by war and failure. Britain is offering a classic example of the end of empire, as witnessed from ancient Greece and Rome, through the Habsburgs and Ottomans, to the late Soviet Union. Cut your losses and run, the rulers whisper to themselves in such terminal crises. But loss of nerve abroad soon turns in on itself to infect the home country. And finally there is Socialism, an export from Moscow, for decades swallowed all over the world by people unable to distinguish between disease and cure, and still a poison in the bloodstream of Britain.

To give Blair his due, he was quick to perceive that the Socialism of his youth made the Labour party unelectable, and kept the Conservatives in office for long years under Margaret Thatcher and John Major. The Labour party had to reinvent itself. The task was immense, nothing less

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than a complete dislocation, a Gorbachev-like perestroika. Blair took his party by the scruff of its neck. There was nothing idealistic about it. His was the courage and determination of someone desperate for power. Out with the Marxist-inspired ideology of class war and nationalization of the means of production, out with cloth-cap militants and veterans of picket lines, out with unilateral disarmament. Out with critics and hardliners too, in a thorough internal purge of the party. Skeptical, and sometimes downright hostile to a leader with such unnatural credentials, the rank and file fell in with Blair because he seemed so confident about the prospect of power. Around Blair was a tight circle of enforcers, climbers, mouthpieces, and paymasters, known generically as Tony's cronies. The Conservatives either failed to appreciate this remaking of Socialism, or could do nothing about it.

■

Just as Blair has remade his party, so he intends to remake the country in his own image. Its institutions must be altered.

■

Blair's landslide victory in the 1997 general election marked the arrival of New Labour and what Blair likes to call the Third Way, or otherwise his "Project." Modernization is the key word. The language in which this is expressed is deliberately vague, with a groundswell of Boy Scout uplift. For instance, "New Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not about dated ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be modern." Or again, "Our case is simple: that Britain can and must be better." The country is to enjoy "modern local government in touch with the people." A typical Blair minister blathers: "Investment in human capital will be the foundation for success in the knowledge-based global economy."

Whatever this sort of verbiage might boil down to, in came the phalanx of Blair clones, politically correct men and many women, "on-message," linked permanently by pager to a headquarters that instructs them what to say on all occasions. In came focus groups to hammer out policy in accordance with opinion polls. In came targets to be achieved, as many as 8,636 at last count, covering such things as truancy, "the quality of life worldwide," the number of people who say "they eat as much meat as ever," the weeding of official archives, the acquisition of dried botanical specimens in Kew Gardens, and so on in corners of the nation never before rummaged. In came special advisers and spin doctors, 148 of them at last count, in an agitprop machinery comprising a Strategic Communications Unit, a Social Exclusion Unit, a Performance and Innovation Unit, and many more besides.

Just as Blair has remade his party, so he intends to remake the country in his own image. Its institutions must be altered. The Project has a subtext with a fine Soviet ring about it, the "National Changeover Plan," altogether leading toward a social democracy and a republic, to adapt Britain for the Franco-German continental system now taking shape in Europe, with its capital in Brussels. Everything Conservatives stand for is to be eliminated so absolutely that they will not return to office for a century, if ever. Blair says, "No one cares about the past anymore, except for nostalgia." Britain, he asserts with a straight face, is "a new young country." In speech after speech, he lays on the word "new." Last year, in the keynote address to his annual party conference, he railed like a Soviet general secretary against "the dark forces of conservatism." And who might these be? Anyone and everyone who likes to do things the way they had been done before, and so by definition outside the Project.

'SPECKS OF ANTIQUE DIRT'

In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, there is a passage of savage elegy in which the Resident Controller projects a future where the past has been abolished. As he speaks, he waves a hand as though with an invisible whisk brushing away dust. "Whisk—and those specks of antique dirt called Athens and Rome, Jerusalem and the Middle Kingdom—all were gone." In the three years in which he has been in office, Resident Controller Blair has been likewise whisking away the specks of antique dirt accumulated to make Britain what it was in its own eyes, and in those of the rest of the world. To the historian Simon Schama, Blair's denial of history is "terrible and creepy." Another eminent historian, Paul Johnson, argues that the country's institutions gave the British freedom under the law, so developing the individualism that made the British who they were. Blair's "undoing of the work of many generations" is a threat to that individualism.

A number of recent journalistic books have titles that tell the story: *The Abolition of Britain*, *After Britain*, *The Day Britain Died*, *In Memory of England* (a particularly poignant cry of pain, prompted when its author, Peter Vansittart, discovered that British farmers already need permission from Brussels to plant trees on their own land). Passing out of living memory, the old social order is represented in newspaper obituaries. Here, for instance, is Hugh Coleridge, who in 1940 saved the men on his stricken submarine by making safe its depth charges. Here are pilots: Dennis David, who at the time of Dunkirk shot down eleven German aircraft; Joe Kyall, who afterwards in the Battle of Britain shot down nine; and Harold Hobday, who breached the Eder Dam, was afterwards shot down, escaped on foot through Holland and France, and was back flying bombers. Dominic Bruce escaped seventeen times from German prison camps. Much decorated, Tony Lewis was at twenty-four the youngest colonel to command a combat unit in the war, and Laurence Fowler "clinched victory" by his leadership at a desperate moment fighting the Japanese in Burma in 1945.

Like others before them, that older generation had the certainty of their values and beliefs. They contributed to their country because they knew that it guaranteed them freedom under the law. It was a social contract, the outcome of centuries of trial and error. Compromise between opposing interests had certainly made British democracy a patchwork of oddities, but in the end everybody had due rights and liberties. Soon after Blair's election, Peter Mandelson,

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In 1894, Theodor Herzl, a journalist and thoroughly assimilated Austrian Jew, was assigned by his Vienna paper to cover the notorious Dreyfus trial in France. The experience of seeing this Jewish officer being railroaded to a life sentence on Devil's Island led him to the recognition that life for Jews in Europe was untenable and that the solution of the "Jewish problem" lay in the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

What are the facts?

The Birth of a Dream. The return to Zion had for 2,000 years been the dream of Europe's dispersed Jews, the only hope in their miserable lives. "Next year in Jerusalem" had always been the watchword. But nothing was done to bring this dream to reality. Theodor Herzl organized the first Zionist Congress in Basel (Switzerland) in 1897 and political Zionism was born.

The concept of creating a new nation in what was then a sparsely-settled country was something totally new, never before attempted in the history of mankind. But Herzl's vision fired up world Jewry and especially the Jews of eastern Europe, who were despairing under the yoke of Russian oppression and recurring pogroms. Energized by Zionist aspirations, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour issued his famous Declaration in 1917, by which Palestine was established as a national home for the Jewish people. In 1922, the League of Nations entrusted Britain with the Mandate for Palestine. Regrettably, and contrary to the Balfour Declaration and the requirement of the Mandate, Britain decided that the provisions for setting up a Jewish national home would not apply east of the Jordan River. That area constituted three-fourths of the territory of the Mandate and eventually became the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. Only one-quarter of Palestine remained to fulfill the Jewish dream.

A Nation is Born and Succeeds. The modern state of Israel was founded in May 1948, almost exactly fifty years ago—fifty years after Herzl formulated the concept. Immediately upon its creation, the country was invaded by the armies of five Arab countries. With a total Jewish population of only about 650,000, and with limited armaments and resources, the ragtag army of Israel defeated the combined might of the aggressors and established itself firmly within its boundaries. Transjordan (now renamed Jordan) stayed in possession of Judea/Samaria (now known as the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem. Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. The price was very high. In this bloodiest of wars imposed on Israel, over 6,000 citizen-soldiers died -- over 1% of the population. It is as if the United States were to suffer a loss of close to 3 million people! It was not the only war that its neighbors visited on Israel. In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel once again prevailed; it repossessed Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), the eastern part of Jerusalem, and conquered the vast Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. And once more, in 1973, the Arabs tried to destroy Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Once more, they suffered defeat.

> "One would think that the world, especially the emerging nations, would wish to learn from Israel's example, so as to emulate its achievement. Unfortunately, almost the exact opposite is the case."

Despite being under constant attack and siege and having suffered over 20,000 dead in those defensive wars, Israel created social and political systems and an economy that continues to amaze experts worldwide. Israel is the only truly democratic country in the entire Middle East, with governmental structure and institutions comparable to those of the United States. Its economy—despite the enormous defense expenditures mandated by the aggressiveness of its neighbors and despite the effort and expense of having absorbed more than 2.5 million immigrants (four times the population at the creation of the state)—can only be described as a miracle of human accomplishment. Virtually everything—infrastructure such as roads, railroads, ports, airports, water carriers, electricity stations and distribution networks—had to be built from a minimal base. Today, Israel's economy is booming. It is a leader in high-tech technology; it has created one of the most advanced agricultural systems in the world; it is one of world leaders in economic growth rate; it has one of the highest per-capita incomes in the world; and it is the world leader in exports per capita.

We have in this century seen the demise of many "isms", the most prominent failures being those of Communism and Nazism. But Zionism, the national movement of the Jewish people, has flourished despite incredible obstacles—to an extent that the visionary Theodor Herzl could not have possibly imagined 100 years ago. One would think that the world, especially the emerging nations, would wish to learn from Israel's example, so as to emulate its achievements. Unfortunately, almost the exact opposite is the case. Goaded by the Arab nations, inalterably hostile to Israel and single-mindedly dedicated to its destruction, the United Nations has offered more than 100 resolutions censuring and condemning Israel's actions.

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one of the closest of his cronies, gravely explained that "the era of pure representative democracy is slowly coming to an end." So it is. In the process of remaking Britain in his modern image, Blair has launched the requisite structural changes to the great institutions of state, and they are irreversible. Identity, character, values, morals, democracy itself, are all being bundled up and thrown out in the wholesale repudiation of the past.

THE BRITISH CRACK-UP

The first institution to be broken was the Union of Great Britain, which bound together Scotland and Wales, Ulster and England. There was no real call to do so. Scottish and Welsh nationalists had always existed, deluding themselves with invented grievances and inferiority complexes. The English ensured that the Celtic minorities had a fair share and more of opportunities and benefits. But Blair pushed through referendums to appease nationalist demands by granting measures of devolution. The referendums were rigged, in the sense that the government financed and organized the vote it wanted. Public money was not available to opponents of devolution.

The Scots now have a parliament, and the Welsh an assembly, for no discernible reason elected by proportional representation rather than the traditional first-past-the-post system. Again for no discernible reason, these two bodies have limited but different powers. Invidiously, Scottish and Welsh constituency members retain seats in the Westminster parliament, which puts the English in the position of subsidizing people who can intervene in their affairs while they are refused a say in Scottish and Welsh affairs. English people are already complaining that Scottish and Welsh neighbors have begun to resent them. A separatist Campaign for an English Parliament has started up. Manifesting itself so far mostly in the form of football hooliganism, English nationalism is a monster slowly awakening in its cave. Vice versa, devolution is virtually certain to evolve into the demand for full independence. Constitutional upheavals of this kind have every potential for turning peaceable people into would-be ethnic cleansers. Blair has managed the almost unimaginable feat of bringing British identity into question. "British" indeed looks set to become as obsolete a term as "Soviet."

In Ulster, the Protestant majority used to discriminate against the Catholic minority in such basic matters as employment and the allocation of public housing. It was criminal not to correct these injustices through the democratic procedures that were in place. In the Seventies, the IRA, a nationalist and terrorist group, began a murderous campaign to unite Ulster with the Republic of Eire. Hardly more than a couple of hundred gunmen were involved initially, with very limited support in the Catholic community. The IRA was subsidized and armed by the Soviet Union and Libya, and Irish-Americans, openly out to damage Britain.

IRA terror has cost over 3,000 lives. The John Major government started initiatives to end it through various power-sharing proposals. The Blair government has gone much farther in a so-called peace process, a label that in true Blairite style conceals that it is nothing of the kind, but outright surrender to terror. Convicted murderers have been released from prison, and the police force which held the line against terror is being neutered. Under the most intense pressure that Blair could exert, with President Clinton standing over his shoulder, the Protestants have agreed to participate with the IRA in a joint Ulster assembly exercising powers over the province. Thus the former IRA official executioner, a man with cold-blooded murders on his conscience, is now an Ulster government minister. Blair sent forces to oppose Saddam Hussein and Milosevic on the grounds that they were terrorists, but he has succumbed without ado to their equivalent at home. This shameful appeasement contains the potential for future bloodshed quite as surely as Neville Chamberlain's Munich precedent. The British people of Ulster are being delivered to Eire slowly, but as effectively as the Czechoslovaks were to Hitler.

■

Blair holds parliamentary procedure in contempt, further nudging the central pillar of democracy into the margin of national life.

■

Decentralizing power so recklessly, Blair has eroded the Westminster parliament and its authority. He and his cronies, his targets and his special units, hold parliamentary procedure in contempt, further nudging the central pillar of democracy into the margin of national life. Margaret Thatcher was criticized for voting in fewer than 50 percent of parliamentary debates; Blair has voted in around 10 percent. Prime Minister's Question Time is the customary debate in which members of parliament are able to hold the executive to account for its actions. Blair has compressed the standard two weekly sessions into one. Blair habitually cancels cabinet meetings, or closes them after a quarter of an hour, with ministers themselves complaining that cabinet government is also a thing of the past.

The upper chamber of parliament, the House of Lords, for centuries was composed of hereditary peers. Losing its powers over time, the House of Lords had become a place for valuable revision of legislation. A minority of peers were appointed on merit. The arrangement was hardly democratic, and indeed had no rationale except that, like many such peculiar British institutions, it worked well. Impulsively, without explaining whether the future composition of the House of Lords depended on election or appointment, Blair axed the hereditary peers, with the exception of a handful, also a wholly illogical measure. Party politics motivated him. The peers were mainly Conservative. "They vote against us," he let slip to someone who questioned him about it. Now he has packed the house with a scratch lot of cronies, placemen, and carpetbaggers, many of whom have contributed to party funds, in effect buying their way in, and some of whom are mired in sleaze. In his three years, Blair has already appointed more life peers than Margaret Thatcher did during a decade.

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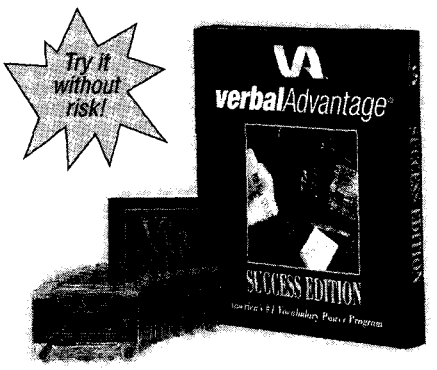

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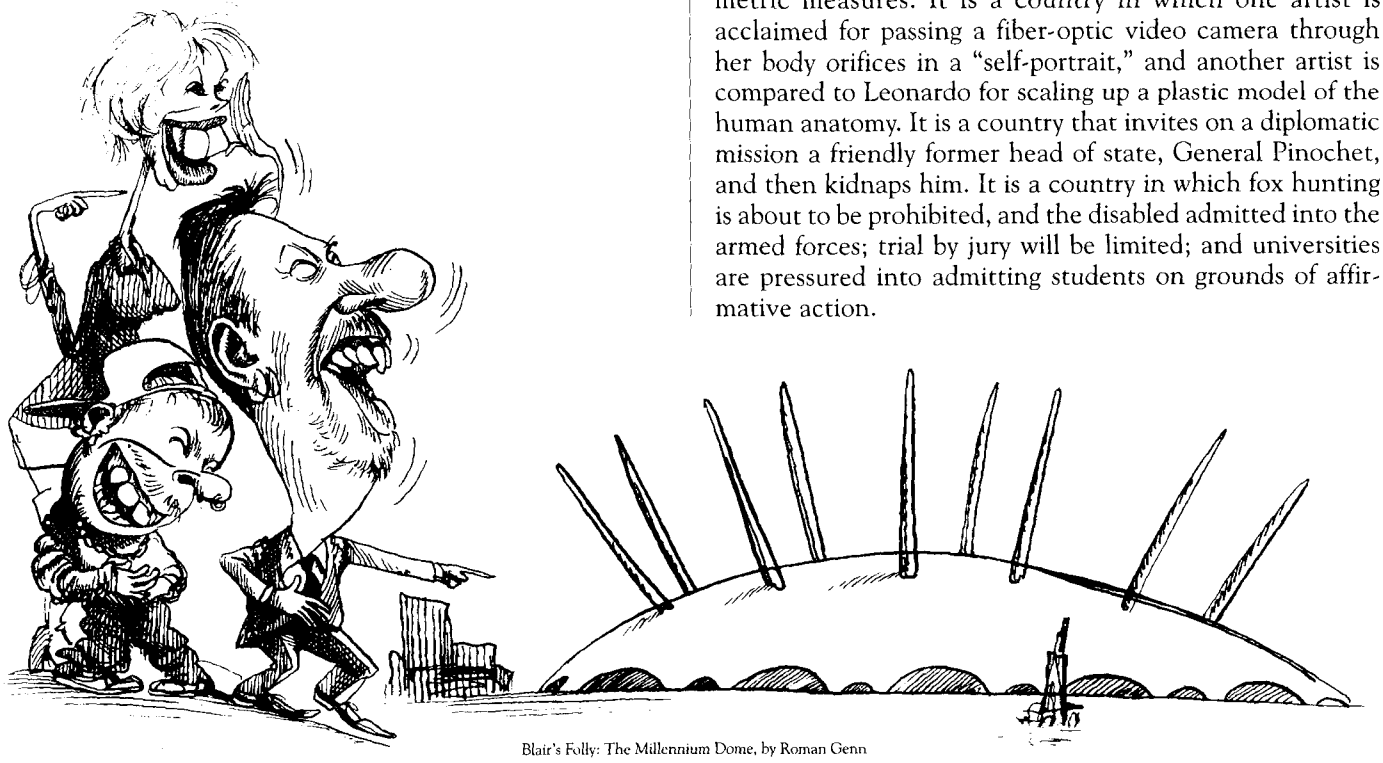
So many of the checks and balances on Blair's powers have disappeared that he seems to be aspiring to become president of Britain. He heightens this suspicion by frequently usurping or degrading the monarch's role. He likes to cancel the meeting on a Tuesday at which the prime minister is supposed to keep the monarch informed. Most conspicuously, he orchestrated the funeral of the Princess of Wales to cut out the royal family and exploit the mass grief of the occasion to his advantage. The Queen is denied a royal yacht, but has to provide what had hitherto been the aircraft of the Queen's Flight to convey Blair and his family to their vacations in the sun.

NOT 'THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH'

These changes collectively contribute to a gathering social, moral, and cultural vacuum. Liberty, ancient right, and custom are no longer secure. Nobody knows how to behave, nor what to believe, nor even what common sense is. The resulting confusion finds its exact symbol in the modernist Dome built in a London suburb to celebrate the Millennium. At a cost to the taxpayer of well over a billion dollars by now, it had a projected life span of 20 years at most. Coming into office, Blair had the chance to cancel this extravaganza, but instead decided that the Dome would be "the greatest show on earth," and he appointed cronies to run it. Since past British achievements by definition were not to be celebrated, nobody could imagine what to put into the Dome. The central exhibit is a fiberglass model of a human body, 170 feet high but sexless, and the entrance to which is through the anus. There are so few visitors that the Dome is a disaster in every sense, "a great monument to human vanity," in the words of an author of a book about it. The composer Andrew Lloyd Webber suggests a ceremonial burning of it. An infuriated public expects from Blair an apology that is not forthcoming.

Not necessarily responsible for each and every abomination, Blair nonetheless presides with equanimity and encouragement over all of them. He invites to Downing Street pop stars boasting of their use of heroin, and he fawns over them for the photographers. He gives a prestigious award for his work to an unrepentant Stalinist apologist, the historian Eric Hobsbawm. He appoints a crony to ensure that museums will lose their funding unless they meet a quota whereby a certain percentage of their visitors comes from ethnic minorities. Bernie Grant was a Socialist member of parliament in whose constituency a policeman was murdered by a rioting mob made up mostly of West Indians. Grant rejoiced, saying of the police, "What they got was a bloody good hiding." When Grant himself died, the Blairite establishment turned up to mourn at his funeral. Blair eagerly endorses an official report by a judge who claims that the entire police force displays "institutional racism," alternatively "unwitting racism," jargon language devoid of meaning.

Troubled to the core, morally and intellectually bewildered, Britain is now a country in which a 78-year-old man is arrested for putting up posters on a wall with the slogans, "Don't forget the 1945 war," and, "Free Speech for England." It is a country in which town halls refuse to fly the national flag for fear of giving offense. It is a country in which a farmer is robbed by three criminals with 114 convictions among them. Shooting one of them dead in self-defense, the farmer is sent to prison for life, and the criminal's relations seek to bring legal action for compensation. It is a country in which an experienced headmistress receives a two-year suspended prison sentence for slapping a delinquent child. It is a country in which a doctor has to flee for her life because her neighbors believe that "pediatrician" means the same as "pedophile." It is a country in which a trader is prosecuted for using English rather than metric measures. It is a country in which one artist is acclaimed for passing a fiber-optic video camera through her body orifices in a "self-portrait," and another artist is compared to Leonardo for scaling up a plastic model of the human anatomy. It is a country that invites on a diplomatic mission a friendly former head of state, General Pinochet, and then kidnaps him. It is a country in which fox hunting is about to be prohibited, and the disabled admitted into the armed forces; trial by jury will be limited; and universities are pressured into admitting students on grounds of affirmative action.



Blair's Folly: The Millennium Dome, by Roman Genn

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Europe is roaring in to fill the vacuum. Throughout its history, Britain was careful to maintain a balance of power whereby neither Germany nor France had the supremacy to destroy the independence of Britain. In combination, Germany and France are now bending and breaking Britain to their national interests, and there is no longer a balance of power. They do things differently in Europe. They have their languages, their legal codes, their institutions, their history and customs. Blair's attacks on British institutions, his appeasement of terror, his arrogance and political correctness, make sense only as indispensable preparations for a decision already taken, to submerge Britain once and for all in the European Union. In Blair's view, patriotism expired in the Sixties. He doesn't value his own country enough to cherish its independence, its quirkiness, what Chesterton once praised as "the rolling English road." Preparing to concede more and more British interests to Brussels, Blair already seems to be enacting a Napoleonic fantasy that he is the future President of Europe.

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There is to be one more referendum, this time on whether to abandon the pound for the euro. They will rig that too with public funding. Brussels will then command the harmonization of everything—tax and defense policies, law and policing, until folk dancing remains the sole permitted expression of nationality, as in the old Soviet Union. The Westminster parliament will have voluntarily abrogated its powers, a step without precedent in a democracy at peace. The European Union is run by unelected politicians and officials, and no mechanism exists to bring them to account, let alone to dismiss them from office. Here is a command bureaucracy, and a most ingenious and modernized version of a totalitarian system it is too. The old Britain, the land of the free, the mother of parliaments, Shakespeare's scepter'd isle and other Eden, could never conceivably have fitted into it.

A WILL TO RESIST?

The British take their time. They are not so easily fooled. George Orwell spoke for them with the words, "There is always a new tyrant waiting to take over from the old." Deep within the society, anger is exploding the barriers the British erect to restrain their emotions. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators from all over the country converged on London in support of fox hunting. Only a small portion of these could have been fox hunters; they were concerned with the principle. Genteel ladies gave Blair the (disapproving) slow hand-clap at the annual meeting of the Women's Institute, normally a body concerned exclusively with household matters. Protesting against the price of fuel, a handful of truckers and haulers blockaded the oil refineries and brought the country to an instant standstill. Within hours, there was no gas. The roads became free of traffic, hoarders bought up everything in supermarkets and shops, emergency services wound down. Conditions such as these are brought about by foreign invasion or war.

An outcry arose against the government, even in the largely Blairite media. Nine out of ten people polled supported the truckers. They appreciate that the price of gas has been rising steeply on world markets, but they resent that the government worsens this plight by adding a tax of at least 70 percent on every gallon, making British fuel the most expensive in Europe. Since 1992, Labour has had a convincing lead in the polls. Now for the first time, the Conservatives have moved ahead.

Revolts by assorted libertarians and taxpayers, then. Yes, and a portent. The countries of Europe experienced simultaneous copycat actions from their truckers, and some of their governments conspicuously caved in and cut the cost of fuel. What counts is what works, eh? The era of representative democracy is drawing to a close, is it? In that case, there is nothing to replace it except civil disobedience, the backlash of those who have no way to protect themselves except by violence. Blair may of course be right in his estimate that the British are dying on their feet, no longer patriots, with no wish to be responsible for themselves, and glad to bring the curtain down on their history. He is putting them to the test. The British now grasp that they must decide what kind of people they are. That is the point to which Tony Blair has brought them. **NR**

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The Fierce People

The wages of anthropological incorrectness

JOHN J. MILLER

IT'S one of the most celebrated passages in the literature of anthropology: "I looked up and gasped when I saw a dozen burly, naked, filthy, hideous men staring at us down the shafts of their drawn arrows! Immense wads of green tobacco were stuck between their lower teeth and lips making them look even more hideous, and strands of dark-green slime dripped or hung from their noses."

That's how Napoleon A. Chagnon described his first encounter with the Yanomamo, one of the most primitive tribes on the planet. They were practically unknown to the outside world before the 1960s, when Chagnon journeyed to the wild borderlands of Brazil and Venezuela to live among them. His writings on that experience, plus documentary films based on numerous follow-up visits, made the Yanomamo famous. Chagnon described an exotic culture of drug-snorting Amazonians who wore almost no clothing, fought wars over women, and ate the ashes of their dead. Nearly 1 million copies of his groundbreaking book, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People*, are in print. It's widely considered the best ethnography ever written. There's hardly an Anthro 101 course in the land that doesn't reference this pioneering work. Chagnon is simply the most important cultural anthropologist of his generation.

Now a forthcoming book by Patrick Tierney describes him as a fraud, and worse: a murderer who deliberately spread a measles epidemic among the Yanomamo. W. W. Norton & Co. won't officially publish *Darkness in El Dorado* until mid November, but its galleys already have won it a National Book Award nomination and an excerpt in *The New Yorker*. Tierney supposedly documents what is the biggest scandal ever to touch academic anthropology—bigger even than Derek Freeman exposing Margaret Mead's seminal book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, as a sham. If conservatives hailed the Mead debunking as a case study in the dangers of cultural relativism, it's the Left that now wants Chagnon's head.

The stakes are enormous. Mead was probably nothing more than a dupe. Chagnon, according to Tierney and his allies, consciously destroyed thousands of lives. The charges are astonishing, and they've been reported virtually everywhere, often without skepticism. There's only one problem with them: They're wholly and indisputably false. Chagnon is the target of one of the greatest smear campaigns ever waged against a scholar.

In October, I met the gray-bearded, 62-year-old Chagnon at his secluded home just south of Traverse City, Mich. He greeted me on his driveway looking like he had just stepped out of the bush: He wore a khaki shirt and vest loaded with

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zippers and pockets, plus canvas-and-denim hunting pants. He retired from the University of California at Santa Barbara last year, and then moved to this wooded plot. His house can't be seen from the road because of all the trees; it's an ideal retreat for someone who wants privacy. But Chagnon has turned a small study by the front door into a war room. Beneath a portrait of Bonaparte, the anthropologist has battled for weeks to rebut Tierney's allegations, going through old notes and organizing support among former students and sympathetic colleagues. E. O. Wilson calls every other day. Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker have backed him publicly. UC-Santa Barbara and the University of Michigan maintain websites that are in the process of posting point-by-point refutations of Tierney's arguments. "I'm considering legal action," says Chagnon.

Controversy has surrounded Chagnon for years. Much of it is driven by pettiness: Less successful anthropologists envy the influence Chagnon wields. They're offended, too, by the hard-headed, scientific approach he takes into the field, and they harbor ideological resentments for the way Chagnon has described the Yanomamo. Chagnon called his subjects "the fierce people"—partly because that's what they call themselves in their own language, but also because of the chronic violence characterizing their society. In one survey, Chagnon estimated that a quarter of adult Yanomamo men die at the hands of other Yanomamo. He also reported data showing that Yanomamo men who kill produce more offspring than those who don't. In other words, killers have greater reproductive success than non-killers. To a sociobiologist like Chagnon—i.e., someone who believes human behavior and culture are the result of natural selection—that's a very important finding. To many anthropologists, however, sociobiology's genes-to-culture pipeline is a gentrified form of racism, and Chagnon is the enemy.

Reuters NewMedia Inc./CORBIS

Chagnon's genes-to-culture pipeline

Chagnon's greatest nemesis may not be Tierney, but Terence Turner, a Cornell University anthropologist who has also studied Amazonians. "Sociobiology is an unviable and logically indefensible reductionism," he says. Furthermore, "Chagnon's pronouncements about the intrinsic violence of the Yanomamo has actively hurt them." Turner complains that politicians and businessmen who want to exploit the Yanomamo homelands for their rich gold deposits use Chagnon's work to demonize the tribe for standing in their way. He's been making this point for more than a decade. In 1994, he labeled Chagnon "a sociopath" for statements that he believed were politically harmful to the Yanomamo, and he denounced Chagnon before a crowded room at the American Anthropological Association's annual convention. Turner, who describes himself as "a Marxist," told me that he first met Tierney "five or six years ago," when he was commuting between Chicago and Ithaca, N.Y. He routinely changed planes in Pittsburgh, where Tierney was living. A mutual friend introduced them, and they began regular meetings at the airport. In the acknowledgments to *Darkness in El Dorado*, Tierney thanks Turner for his "encouragement." (Tierney was not available for an interview.)

In fact, it was a letter from Turner and Lesley Sponsel of the University of Hawaii that set off the storm of press coverage that is now engulfing Chagnon. "Both of us have seen galley copies of a book by Patrick Tierney," they wrote to the president of the American Anthropological Association in September. "In its scale, ramifications, and sheer criminality and corruption, [the scandal Tierney describes] is unparalleled in the history of Anthropology." Chagnon, they claimed, "probably started" a measles epidemic that killed "hundreds, perhaps thousands" of Yanomamo in 1968. This was done in the service of "fascistic eugenics." What's more, Chagnon's scholarly work on the Yanomamo is tainted by "false, non-existent, or misinterpreted data." The "nightmarish story" Tierney tells in his book, wrote Turner and Sponsel, is "a real anthropological heart of darkness beyond the imagining of even a Josef Conrad (though not, perhaps, a Josef Mengele)."

It is indeed a nightmarish story—and a riveting one. Tierney, a self-described "human-rights activist," relates how Chagnon first arrived in South America under the direction of James Neel, a University of Michigan geneticist. Neel, who passed away in February, wanted to study primitive people, and he picked the Yanomamo. Tierney suggests that Neel had a dark motive: What he secretly intended to do was test a pet theory that state-of-nature populations like the Yanomamo were more susceptible to selection pressures than those living in the comforts of civilization. Because only the fittest Yanomamo would survive, Neel speculated that tribe members were of a genetically superior stock. Neel, according to Tierney, was also on the lookout for something he called a "leadership gene" that would express itself among the Yanomamo, as if they were a tribe of baboons with dominant males. "Leadership gene" isn't a term Neel used in any of his writings; Tierney employs it because a source of his said he heard Neel use it in 1963. The source is Terry Turner.

Tierney then describes how Neel and Chagnon set about performing a sick experiment to test the fitness of the

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Yanomamo. They went into the jungle with a measles vaccine called Edmonston B, which uses a weakened live virus. This was exactly the wrong approach to take with an isolated, immune-depressed population like the Yanomamo, says Tierney. The result was "ethnocide"—"the worst epidemic" in Yanomamo history. "I determined that the course of the epidemic closely tracked the movements of Neel's team" in Yanomamo territory, he writes. In other words, everywhere they went, Neel and Chagnon spread measles. Tierney doesn't come right out and say that the scientists wanted to start a measles outbreak in order to demonstrate their Darwinian ideas, but he comes awfully close, and he notes that the Seneca, an Indian tribe in the United States, were once used in syphilis studies.

It all sounds horrible. But it's based on a lie. Live-virus measles vaccines have never caused an outbreak anywhere, even though they've been used hundreds of millions of times. That's according to just about every medical expert who's been consulted on the question, including Samuel Katz, one of the Edmonston B vaccine developers, and Mark Papania, who runs the measles-eradication program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's plausible that someday there will be a documented case of transmission, but the likelihood is so small it approaches zero. Tierney himself must know this, because he reports that "Today, scientists still do not know whether people who have been vaccinated with Edmonston B can transmit measles." What a loaded statement: It's like saying lunar geologists still don't know whether the moon's core is made of green cheese.

There was, in fact, a measles epidemic among the Yanomamo in 1968, when Neel and Chagnon arrived on the scene. But they didn't cause it, and their vaccination efforts actually reduced an expected death rate of about one-third to less than one-tenth. For these life-saving efforts, Tierney gives them no credit. Instead, he presents them as monsters—making an extraordinary claim with extraordinarily little evidence.

If that's the book's biggest smear, there are plenty of smaller ones, too. Tierney likes to paint Chagnon as a right-winger who enjoys baiting liberal professors. His primary source for this claim is a 1999 article in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, in which a critic describes Chagnon as "a kind of right-wing character who has a paranoid attitude on people he considers lefty." That critic turns out to be Terry Turner. (For what it's worth, Chagnon told me that until this year, he's always voted for Democrats.) Tierney also notes that Chagnon grew up in Port Austin, Mich., "where differences were not welcomed, where xenophobia, linked to anti-Communist feeling, ran high, and where Senator Joseph McCarthy enjoyed strong support." Tierney has no source for this statement—he simply asserts it—and he isn't at all clear about what it's supposed to reveal. "I don't remember anybody in Port Austin ever talking about McCarthy," says Chagnon. Tierney, nonetheless, declares that Chagnon "received a full portion of [McCarthy's] spirit." Finally—and weirdly, considering that it's irrelevant to the book's larger questions—Tierney calls Chagnon a draft dodger. He writes that Chagnon "got a draft deferment" during the Vietnam War (again, citing no source). "It's bulls**t!" sputtered Chagnon when I read him the passage. "I never had a deferment. They didn't draft men my age who were married and had two kids. It never came up." (Chagnon was born in 1938, married in 1960, and was a father twice over by 1963.) Yet Tierney ominously notes, "Chagnon has never discussed his decision to avoid the draft." The author of that sentence would be wise to avoid accusing others of McCarthyism.

■

Tierney presents Neel and Chagnon as monsters—making an extraordinary claim with extraordinarily little evidence.

■

Turner is now busy distancing himself from Tierney. "I didn't do the research. I'm by no means a knee-jerk advocate of his work," he told me. He's also trying to disown the widely circulated letter he wrote with Sponsel. "It was a confidential memo that was leaked on the Internet," he explains. He's irritated that it has become public, but less because of its fantastically erroneous claims than the fact that he must now face the inconvenience of owning up to what he's said. And Turner continues to hope that some of the allegations made by Tierney will stick. "Chapter Ten will be found to be true," he insists, referring to a section in which Tierney says Chagnon faked data to make dubious points about the Yanomamo for the sake of sociobiology. Of course, Chapter Ten has plenty of its own problems. In it, for instance, Tierney makes much of the fact that Chagnon doesn't reveal the names of certain villages he studied. "It took me quite a while to penetrate Chagnon's data, but, by combining visits to the villages in the field with GPS locations and mortality statistics, I can identify nine of the twelve villages . . ." Tierney could have saved himself all this trouble if he had simply looked at a footnote in one of Chagnon's scholarly articles, which reveals the names of the villages. He should know where to find it, because he cites it in his own book.

Chagnon will remain a controversial figure, if only because he's a sociobiologist. "There's a school of cultural anthropologists that doesn't like to consider the possibility that humans are nasty," he says. "Every theoretician makes assumptions about the nature of human nature. My critics prefer to believe in a myth of a golden age in which people ran around in the forest acting altruistically." He's not exaggerating: Sponsel, the coauthor of Turner's letter, has written elsewhere that "nonviolence and peace were likely the norm throughout most of human prehistory and that intrahuman killing was probably rare." If the Yanomamo are an authentic glimpse at what human prehistory might have looked like, of course, Sponsel's theory is dead wrong—and Chagnon's empirical observations prove it. And so, by the way, does the vicious behavior of Sponsel, Turner, and Tierney. **NR**

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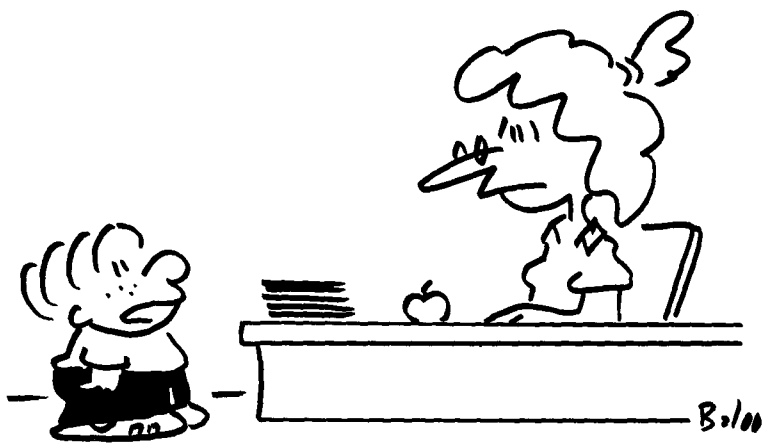

"I didn't do my homework due to an appalling lack of role models."

Forever Hillary

When queried in the bars and clubs
About the way she'd dumped the Cubs,
And who—the Yankees or the Mets—
Would get her calculated bets;
The Missus always had two hats,
Depending on who swung the bats,
And whether she was uptown or
Out in the burbs with some señor.

—W. H. von Dreele

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Dear Bill,

I just got off the phone with Podesta, and he tells me that you never received any of my notes, or the voice mails that I sent, or anything, and I'm just sick about it. Just sick.

This would not have happened if you had e-mail. But we've been around and around on this topic and I know it upsets you when I bring it up, so I'm not going to bring it up again.

Anyway, what I'm trying to say here is that I've been writing and calling for weeks—weeks!—asking for advice, campaign strategy, personal appearances, whatever, you name it, I've asked for it—and I never heard back. Not a word, not a peep.

It was like my first year at Harvard all over again, when I sent daily letters to Dad and received pretty much the same response I got—or, I thought I got—from you. And then I got mad at you for not responding to me and then you got mad at me and then we were both mad at each other over a simple communication problem.

So let me just summarize what I've been trying to say to you these past few months. I would love your help in this very close, very important campaign. I think you know what I said about you that terrible day when the impeachment articles were passed by the House, and that thing that I said is still very much the way I still think, most of the time.

Time, of course, is of the essence. If there's two of us, isn't it more efficient NOT to appear together?

What I'm thinking is that maybe you could do some stuff in the Philadelphia metro area. And the Detroit metro area. And the St. Louis metro area. My feeling is that the metro areas have the greatest concentration of voters most receptive to a "Bill Clinton" pitch. And I mean that with the greatest respect, as that thing that I said about you that day they impeached you will attest to.

So, in closing, let me just say that I would be happy to have your support and help in these crucial last days, in the aforementioned metro areas.

Al

Hey Mom!

Thanks a mill for helping out in some of those tough-nut states. Man! Wish Jeb had his act together down in Florida. But appreciate your help in calming down the blue-hairs.

Swinging for the fence out in California. Probably won't win it, but meanwhile I'm messing up Al's plans for his last week. One word: head fake!

Some possibility, I'm told, that the people's vote and the electrical college could go different ways. Something like, I win one way, he wins the other. Or he wins one way, and I win the other. There's like, a million possibilities. My advice to myself is to just do my thing.

Trying to stay positive. Trying not to run a negative, incisive campaign. It's hard, though. He's got Ed Asner on the blower calling up folks in swing states saying I'm rotten this and bad that. He's got the NAACP running sicko ads about me—and you know the damnedest thing is I went to their thing last summer and gave 'em my compassion thing and now I get this thing all over the airwaves in my thing? Don't need the aggravation. Do not need the aggravation.

Plus which the polls look good. I'm way ahead among the likable voters, which is an added plus. Doing okay with the college kids, doing okay with the married women, doing great with the guys, which is pretty much the story of my life when you get right down to it. Most of the polls have me ahead, and within the margin of error, which is that underlined plus sign next to the "47" or the "48" after my name when they put up the poll numbers on the news shows. Speaking of which, you know who's cute? Paula Zahn. Paula Zahn is cute. Just saying, is all.

But I'm confident, Mom. Upbeat. Feel like I'm gonna win. Because you know why? Because this is America! The voters add up the pluses and the cons, and then vote for the guy they think is the most meretricious.

Hope it's me!

Love,

G.W.

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Restless Virtue

NOEMIE EMERY

Democracy in America, by Alexis de Tocqueville, translated and edited by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, 722 pp., $35)

Tocqueville on American Character: Why Tocqueville's Brilliant Exploration of the American Character Is as Vital and Important Today as It Was Nearly Two Hundred Years Ago, by Michael A. Ledeen (St. Martin's, 240 pp., $23.95)

IN 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, a 25-year-old French judicial officer of the minor nobility, arrived in America, ostensibly to study the prison system and report back on the way justice was dispensed in a republican system. In the nine months that followed, he managed to see the whole country—from the east coast to the Mississippi, from New York to New Orleans—and met presidents and lawyers, frontiersmen and rogues. Over the next decade he wrote two volumes on democracy and the American people: an MRI, as it were, of the national psyche that seems as true today as when he wrote it.

America was the world's first large modern democracy, and it appeared prototypical: Its traits were assumed to grow out of the democratic condition. Now that democracies have been created all over the planet, it is clear that they do not. America is less socialist, less tractable, more entrepreneurial than other democracies: more productive, more creative, more violent. Tocqueville's America was a small, rural, largely unsettled country, populated largely from the British Isles. Today, it is a continental superpower of 270 million people, multiracial, multiethnic, and multi-religious. Yet the character Tocqueville described has been wholly unaltered.

Alexis de Tocqueville

Tocqueville has been of particular importance to conservatives, among other things helping to stimulate their interest in the wellsprings of civil society. Now Michael Ledeen, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, has written a brief, trenchant essay that pulls Tocqueville into the modern political argument. And Harvey Mansfield, the legendary Harvard professor who has trained a generation of conservative scholars and activists, gives us (with Delba Winthrop) a smooth new translation of Tocqueville himself.

As keys to America's success and character, Tocqueville cites three traits. Americans love money. They are driven by many intense contradictions. And they are always and forever on the move. A new people in a new land, with a vast space before them, Americans came here to shake off the past, and kept moving; leaving one place as it was settled, always in search of the new. "It is rare that an American . . . settles forever on the soil he occupies," Tocqueville writes. "A man carefully builds a dwelling . . . and sells it . . . plants a garden and . . . rents it . . . embraces a profession, and quits it. He settles in a place from which he departs soon after, so as to take his changing desires elsewhere." Americans are also driven by a passion for money. In a culture without titles and fixed social classes, it is one of the few things that confers distinction. "There remains scarcely anything but money that creates any visible difference," Tocqueville notes, "the prestige that attached to old things having disappeared." Work is the main road to money, and as Ledeen notes, this has produced our great national rat race, as Americans seek to outdo one another—making more products, doing more things.

Added to this is an inherent tension, between Americans' religious beliefs and their urge to make money; between their individualism and their urge to be social; between the urge to enjoy what one possesses and the urge to possess even more. This is the cost of America's fluid class structure, which gives each man the chance to rise and infects each success with the shadow of failure, in that one can always go higher. Unlike other peoples, Americans do not need to be hungry or desperate to be moved to action and industry.

Oddly enough, the excitability of popular government is balanced by the bourgeois nature of the middle class. "I know of nothing more opposed to revolutionary [mores] . . . than commercial mores," says Tocqueville. "In a constitutional and peaceful democracy . . . love of wealth directs men principally toward

Noemie Emery lives in Alexandria, Va., and writes frequently about politics and culture.

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The Collection of Bank of America

George Caleb Bingham, The Verdict of the People, *1855*

industry. Industry . . . can prosper only with the aid of very regular habits . . . It is the very violence of their desires that renders the Americans so methodical. It troubles their souls, but it arranges their lives."

For Tocqueville, this commonsense temperament makes America resistant to demagogues. One may appear, he may strike a few chords, but beyond this he seldom gets far. "They may sometimes even applaud, but they do not follow him," Tocqueville says of the people.

> To his impetuosity they secretly oppose their inertia; to his revolutionary instincts their conservative interests; their homebody tastes to his adventurous passions; their good sense to his leaps of genius; to his poetry, their prose. He arouses them for a moment with a thousand efforts, but soon after they get away . . . and, as if dragged down by their own weight, they fall back. He exhausts himself in the wish to animate this indifferent and distracted crowd, and finally he sees himself reduced to powerlessness, not because he is defeated, but because he is alone.

Tocqueville also knew that this country would never take its egalitarianism to socialist extremes, lacking the requisite class resentments. Most men had votes, none had titles, a relative few lived in poverty, and fortune, though unevenly distributed, was always viewed as accessible. As Tocqueville wrote, when an aristocracy of wealth succeeds an aristocracy of birth, "There are no longer races of the poor, there are no longer races of the rich, the latter issue from the crowd every day and return to it constantly . . . They therefore do not form a separate class that one can easily define." When Europe was ruled by kings, America was being run and created by self-made men, or at least by their children. In America, says Tocqueville, "everyone works to live, or has worked, or was born of people who worked. The idea of work as a natural and honest condition of humanity is . . . offered to the human mind on every side." Americans are willing to spend large sums to educate and train the underprivileged, but resent spending less to sustain them in idleness. The rich who work hard are widely admired, and the less well-off seek to emulate them, an ambition that is not out of reach. Today, Ledeen points out, we find it quite normal that a college dropout like Bill Gates becomes a billionaire many times over, that refugees like Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright run foreign policy, that a member of Georgia's black underclass becomes a Supreme Court justice.

In other ways also, Tocqueville is prescient. He foresees that the closest we will come to having a peasant class is in the brain-dead labor of the assembly line. He foresees the anecdotal nature of modern campaigning. And he describes the nature of one pitfall so perfectly that one could imagine he envisioned Hillary Clinton herself: the temptation of citizens under a too-powerful federal government to withdraw into their own private interests, surrendering all else to the Nanny State.

> It is absolute, detailed, regular, and mild . . . It provides for their security, foresees and anticipates their needs, facilitates their pleasures, conducts their principal affairs, directs their industry, regulates their estates, divides their inheritances . . . Every day, it renders the employment of the free will less useful and more rare; it confines the action of the will in a smaller space, and little by little steals the use of it from each citizen . . . after taking each individual by turns in its powerful hands . . . the sovereign extends its arms over society [and] covers its surface with a network of small, complicated, painstaking uniform rules, through which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot clear a way . . . It does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them, and directs them; it rarely forces one to act, but it constantly opposes itself to one's acting; it does not tyrannize, it hinders, compromises, enervates, extinguishes, dazes, and finally reduces each nation to being nothing more than a herd of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.

A more deadly account of the Clinton-Gore method could not be committed to print. It is all there, in all of its incessant and miniscule meddling: the safety rules, the smoking rules, the diet guidelines, the FDA cautions, Al Gore's "liveability" agenda, with its federal hotlines for traffic jams; the proposed regulations of speech, thought, and conduct; the assaults on the Boy Scouts and churches.

Tocqueville admits that there is a place for federal power and energy—for great wars and projects—but this is not it. This is the antithesis of the greatness agenda of Alexander Hamilton and Theodore Roosevelt, of the actions of Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt in rousing the country for warfare; of sending a man to the moon. Unlike these endeavors, there is nothing remotely heroic in

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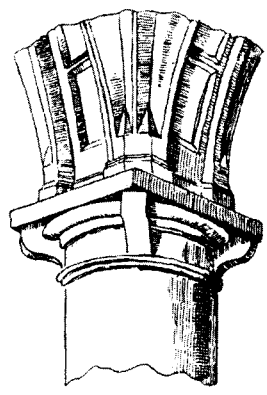
the Nanny State agenda. It amounts instead, to *potchkeying*—a Yiddish word for the meaningless tweaking of many small matters—to no discernible end. Tocqueville notes that these statist bureaucrats would try to keep people in a "perpetual childhood." Ledeen notes that Clinton and Gore campaign "for the children." And everyone notes that people like these—the Al Gores and the Hillary Clintons—tend to talk down in a teacherly manner, as if the world were a vast second grade.

■

America is becoming yet more Tocquevillian, returning to the basics of the social order he observed in 1831.

■

In the end, Tocqueville understood just about everything. He knows why we are resistant to third parties and demagogues, why adventurer-insurgents from Aaron Burr to Pat Buchanan flare up, burn out, and end up mocked or forgotten. He knew time would prove us a moderate country, at home within the boundaries marked by Ronald Reagan on the right and Franklin Roosevelt on the left, and unwilling to move much beyond them. Thus Bill Clinton won as a moderate in 1992, turned left in 1993, and had his head handed to him in 1994. He survived by turning back into a New Democrat and coopting the themes of the Republican Congress, which hit a brick wall of its own making. That Congress (which would never have called itself "revolutionary" had it taken Tocqueville seriously), saw its sharp edges rounded off by the much more popular Republican governors and the campaign of George W. Bush.



Tocqueville, of course, knew all this would happen. Americans, he said, "vary, alter, or renovate secondary things every day; they take great care not to touch the principal ones. They love change, but they dread revolutions . . . An eternal motion reigns in the hearts of such a society . . . no one knows repose in it, but . . . men in it are agitated within certain limits that they scarcely ever exceed."

Tocqueville is also the wave of the future. As we speak, the country is becoming yet more Tocquevillian, returning to the basics of the social order he observed in 1831. Neoconservatives such as Michael Barone and David Frum have noted that, after the consolidation necessitated by war and other crises during much of the 20th century, the country in the 21st is returning to its basic nature. A country in which the innovative reforms come from mayors and governors, not the president or federal agencies, is becoming more Tocquevillian. A country where more people are self-employed or work for small businesses than belong to a union is becoming more Tocquevillian. A country where centrist politicians talk of providing services through private and faith-based organizations is very Tocquevillian. A country of big unions and big corporations is anti-Tocquevillian. A culture of the three big networks and the major media is anti-Tocquevillian; cable, niche magazines, and niche channels are not.

Tocqueville, in short, if he came here again, would find us the same, only more so. We may look and sound different—we are browner and tauper; we are mixtures of several backgrounds and races—but the amazing thing is how superficial these differences are. The great immigrations did not alter our essential character. People came here from Irish bogs and Polish ghettoes and turned into Americans, more like each other and the people they found here than like their coreligionists and ethnic brethren at home.

Tocqueville cannot be brought often enough to the minds of all Americans. Any foreigner wondering about America, or any American wondering about his own country, would do well to read both of these books—Ledeen's, which artfully distills Tocqueville's ideas, and Mansfield and Winthrop's fine translation, which provides a new route of access to a national treasure and his subtle and all-seeing mind. **NR**

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The Prince of Harvard

DAMON LINKER

Educating the Prince: Essays in Honor of Harvey Mansfield, edited by Mark Blitz and William Kristol (Rowman & Littlefield, 326 pp., $40)

HARVEY MANSFIELD is not a household name, even among conservatives, and that is a pity, though it is hardly a surprise. Political philosophers rarely win popularity contests. But Mansfield's work is less well known than it should be even among his fellow political scientists, few of whom acknowledge his substantial contributions to their discipline. Having long ago decided that their liberalism was an unquestionable creed, Mansfield's colleagues in the academy ignore his publications and turn out young Ph.D.'s who have never read a word of his writings. Such is the fate of genuine thinking under the liberal dictatorship that has replaced the republic of letters on most American campuses.

Not that Mansfield lacks influence. Much to the consternation of his Harvard colleagues (many of whom must curse the day he was granted tenure), Mansfield has left his mark on thousands of undergraduate and graduate students over the past four decades. Many of these have gone on to hold top positions in higher education, politics, law, journalism, and business. Now Mark Blitz and William Kristol (respectively a professor of political philosophy at Claremont McKenna College and the editor and publisher of *The Weekly Standard*) have brought together some of the most intellectually impressive of these students to pay tribute to the teacher in *Educating the Prince: Essays in Honor of Harvey Mansfield*.

The range and depth of the 19 essays they have commissioned make the book far more substantial than the average run of such tributes. As one would expect from students of a leading authority and translator of Machiavelli, the author of *The Prince* figures prominently in these pages. But so do reflections on the American founding and the place of statesmanship in modern politics. Add to these the fascinating chapters on Francis Bacon, Shakespeare, Rousseau, Kant, Churchill, Solzhenitsyn, common law, ethics in foreign policy, and the place of the federal bureaucracy in the constitutional order—and you begin to understand Mansfield's distinctive contribution to conservative ideas.

Jon Chase/Harvard News Office

Harvey Mansfield with his wife and co-translator, Delba Winthrop

From the time John Stuart Mill first gave voice to the sentiment, conservatism has been tarred "the stupid party"—the party of opposition to science and reason, and of unthinking assent to the authority of custom and convention. Moreover, American conservatives have often allied themselves with populist movements whose thoughtfulness, to put it delicately, has been somewhat less than apparent. From the time of his early study of Burke and Bolingbroke (*Statesmanship and Party Government*, 1965), Mansfield has done his best to counter this understanding of conservatism—to teach his students that, rightly understood, it is the party of principled and prudent deliberation, the party that admires great acts of virtue and, in doing so, encourages such acts. In other words, conservatism is and should be the party of excellence.

As many of these chapters make clear, Mansfield's teaching begins with Aristotle, from whom we learn that politics is ultimately (in the words of Robert P. Kraynak, professor of political science at Colgate University) "a debate about who should rule." One party to the debate presumes a fundamental inequality among human beings and therefore believes that only the virtuous should have the honor of ruling. The other party denies that there are any relevant hierarchical human differences, and insists that political rule should be shared by all. For Aristotle, politics consists largely of a struggle between oligarchs and democrats, between defenders of distinction and advocates of equality.

For Mansfield, conservatism is the party that admires great acts of virtue and, in doing so, encourages such acts.

If politics is primarily a struggle between competing visions of political justice, how can we hope to determine, let alone realize, the common good? Aristotle's solution was to advocate a "mixed regime" that would blend and moderate the clashing views of both. The democratic belief in the justice of equality would be satisfied by allowing each citizen to "rule and be ruled in turn," while the oligarchic concern for distinction would be reflected in institutions (like election to office) that are based on the presumption that those who win are fitter to rule than those who lose.

Many of the contributors to *Educating the Prince* note the striking similarities between Aristotle's mixed regime and the American experiment in self-government. However, following Mansfield and his own great teacher, Leo Strauss, they also deny that we can apply Aristotle's concepts and categories to modern political conditions in a straightforward manner. The essays by Ralph C. Hancock and Peter Minowitz

Mr. Linker has written for *Commentary*, *Policy Review*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

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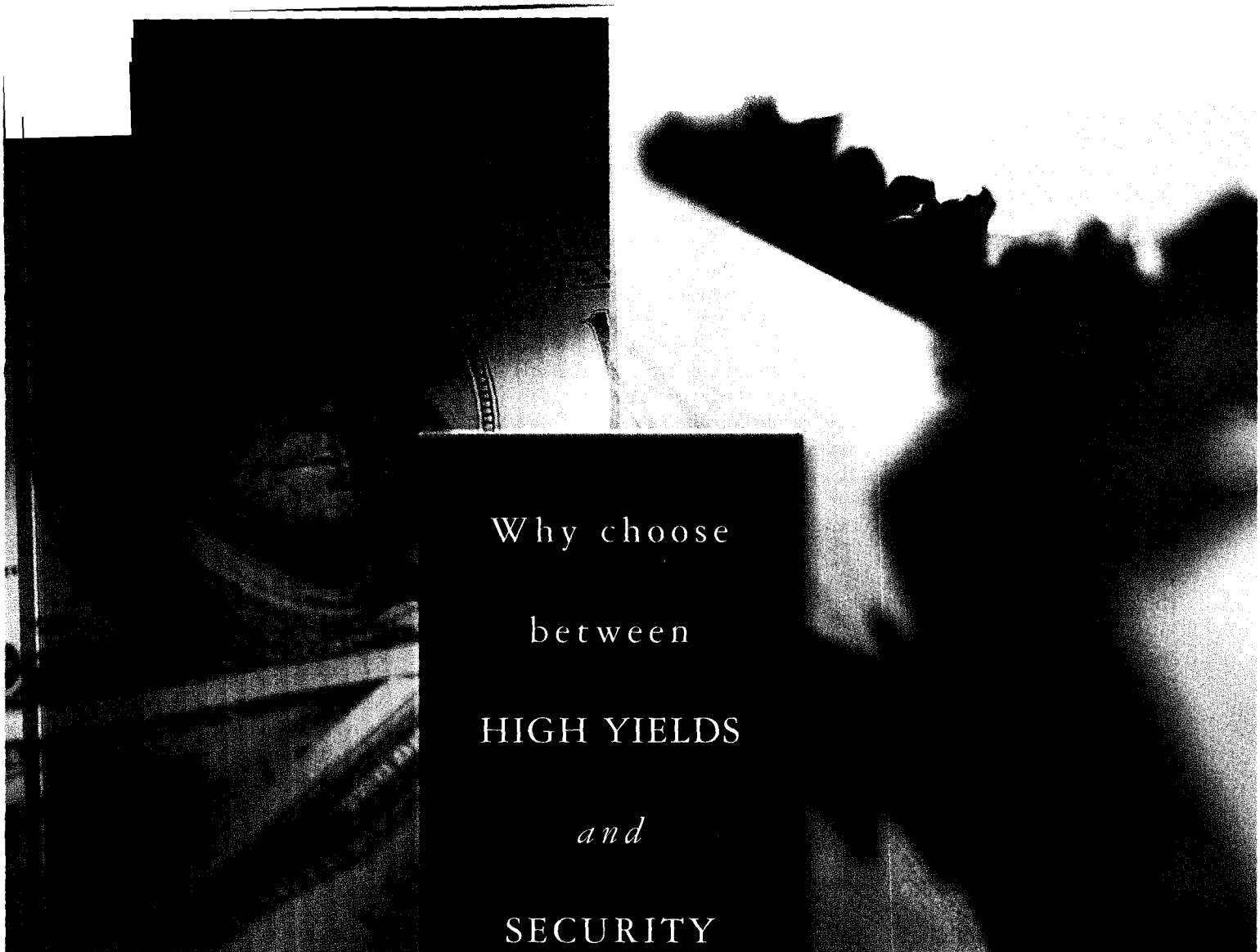

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echo an argument that Mansfield has made in a number of books, most prominently *Taming the Prince* (1989) and *Machiavelli's Virtue* (1996), that Christianity's defense of innate human dignity rendered Aristotle's solution, if not obsolete, then at least in need of revision. The spread of Christianity made it impossible to rely on an oligarchic class to temper the excesses of the democrats, whose egalitarian view of justice had apparently been endorsed by God Himself. In Kraynak's words, those who wished to follow Aristotle in the modern world would be required to "promote virtue indirectly, as 'disguised virtue.'"

This is exactly what Mansfield claims the American Founders were doing: attempting to create a modern analogue to Aristotle's mixed regime suited to the egalitarianism of a Christianized world. It would be a republic in which the unrestrained rule of the people was transformed into responsible self-government by institutional formalities and procedures designed to keep alive the concern for distinction.

As R. Shep Melnick writes in his contribution, the institutions of American government "consist of more than a few basic 'rules of the game.'" They contribute, above all, to shaping "the expectations, aspirations, habits, and inhibitions of rulers and ruled alike." Textbooks are wrong to focus exclusively on the Constitution's role in preventing political tyranny through "checks and balances" among the three branches of government. It certainly does so. But equally important is what Mansfield calls (in the title of his most accessible book) *America's Constitutional Soul* (1991)—that is, the Constitution's capacity to encourage or "call forth" excellence and give it an outlet.

Consider the presidency. Melnick and Glen E. Thurow imply in their chapters that the strength and independence of the presidency lead Americans to see it as something noble. The fact that we exalt the office leads ambitious men to compete for the honor of winning it. At times this competition has yielded great statesmen, and the fact that men as admirable as Washington, Lincoln, and Reagan have held it makes the office nobler still. Those who seek the presidency today have the added burden of living up to their examples—just as they must now live down the disgraceful impropriety of President Clinton's tawdry behavior.

But the Constitution's role in stemming the tide of democratic egalitarianism is not limited to office-seeking. On the contrary, the Founders believed that the liberty enshrined by the Constitution would have similarly salutary effects. By leaving men free to seek distinction for themselves, those who crave it will also strive for greatness in the private sphere. Most will seek honor and wealth in business; a few will pursue prestige in the worlds of science and learning. To quote Kraynak again: "The American expectation is that liberty itself will produce excellence by encouraging elites . . . to excel in the virtues of their calling."

■

Mansfield teaches that America's greatness lies in its continued concern for greatness.

■

America thus encourages the growth of what Jefferson called a "natural aristocracy," even while it appears to be thoroughly democratic. Mansfield teaches that America's greatness lies in its continued concern for greatness—and that thoughtful conservatives should concentrate their energies on preserving its constitutional preconditions. Which is to say, they should resist the forces that would transform the Constitution into a document that expands, rather than limits, the scope of democracy. The push among academics to interpret the Constitution in a thoroughly egalitarian light is merely the most obvious example. Others can be detected in the subtler efforts of pollsters and populists to make Washington more "responsive" to the "will" of the people.

To oppose these trends is to stand against some of the most powerful currents in contemporary American life. This is no easy task. But it is one for which Harvey Mansfield and his students have done as much as anyone can to prepare us. **NR**

The Heretic

RONALD RADOSH

Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation, by Jeffrey Meyers (Norton, 380 pp., $29.95)

THE title of Jeffrey Meyers's new biography of George Orwell comes from V. S. Pritchett, a literary critic who condemned Orwell when he most needed support, and who later, after Orwell finally reached success, tried to atone by showering him with unwanted praise. Indeed, during most of his lifetime, Orwell struggled to get published, had few readers, and was anathematized by most of the Left because he dared to be anti-Communist as well as anti-Fascist. Orwell had devoted himself to combating "the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls." Since these orthodoxies were maintained by some of the most powerful figures in the West, including editors and writers who could block his access to the reading public, serving as the "conscience" of an epoch took a great deal of personal courage.

Meyers is the first biographer to use the definitive 20 volume collection of Orwell's writings, edited by Peter Davison in 1998, as well as other new materials now available in the Orwell archives, and he provides much new information that helps us to understand how and why young Eric Blair became the writer known as Orwell. Born in India in 1903 to a doting mother and a "weak and passive father" who worked for the Opium Department of the British colonial government, Blair was sent to repressive British boarding schools, many of which later served as backdrops to sections of his novels. Following his father, he started out as a colonial policeman in Burma, a career

Mr. Radosh is the author of *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left, and the Leftover Left*, forthcoming from Encounter Books.

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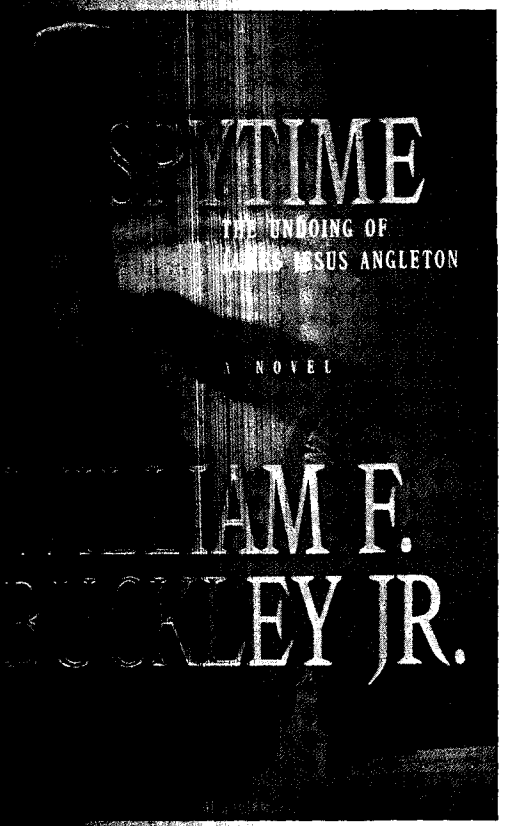

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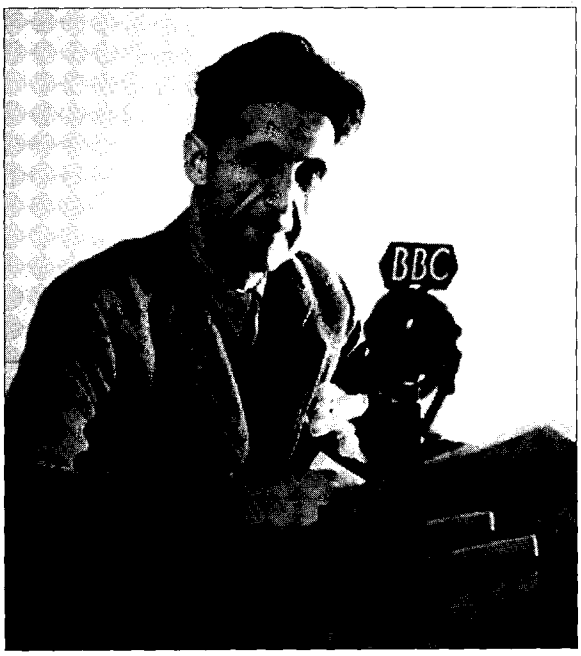
that led the young man to resent and despise the role of the colonizer, and to develop a keen hatred of British imperialism. At 22, he resigned his commission, and despite fierce opposition by his parents, decided to become a writer by experiencing firsthand the lives of those at the bottom of Western society.

As Orwell explained in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate . . . I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man." To go from comfort to total squalor was something few would be willing to do for literary purposes, but for Orwell it was the only way to become a writer. For four years he tramped around, dressed in rags and washing dishes in the grimiest establishments. In Paris, living on a few francs a day, he suffered real poverty—and wrote, "It is a feeling of relief, almost of pleasure, at knowing yourself at last genuinely down and out." The experience led to his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, published in January of 1933. Contrasting the life of the wealthy with that of the destitute, Orwell dramatized the condition of the bottom part of society and praised their dignity and pride in their ill-paid work. Coming out as the Great Depression hit in the West, the book "met the demand for social realism" and served as Orwell's introduction to the Left. Concerned that *Down and Out* might embarrass his family, and wanting to further distance himself from his past, he adopted the pseudonym George Orwell, after the Orwell River in Suffolk.

Orwell might well have become part of the mainstream left-wing crowd, were it not for his heterodoxy over the question of Spain. An exception among those who were not Communists, he saw the Spanish Civil War as the single most important battle of his generation; hence he volunteered to fight with the Loyalists instead of simply going as a sympathetic journalist or observer, like Hemingway, Auden, and others. Orwell wrote, "I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against the tyrants."

Rejected by the British Communists, who sensed from the start that they could not trust someone with such an independent mind, Orwell went to Spain in 1936 under the auspices of the Independent Labour party, a far-left fringe group affiliated with the larger Labour party. They gave him the necessary credentials, as well as an introduction to the Spanish POUM (Unified Marxist Workers' Party), an anti-Stalinist revolutionary Marxist group that at the time had a scant 3,000 militants.

As readers of *Homage to Catalonia* know, it was in that center of anarchism and radicalism that Orwell saw the civil war erupting within the Civil War: Local Communist militia tried to seize the telephone exchange run by anarchists and syndicalists, and brutal fighting broke out. The POUM fought alongside the anarchists; as Orwell explained in an essay at the time, "We thought . . . that we were simply defending ourselves against an attempted coup d'état." Here Orwell learned the full extent of Stalin's plan to destroy the Spanish revolution: He sought to use it as a bargaining lever with both the Western powers and the Nazis, while hoping to create a subservient client state akin to the "People's Republics" that sprang up in Eastern Europe after World War II. Strangely, Meyers endorses the Soviet view of the war and agrees with the historian Hugh Thomas, who has written that the anarchists and the POUM were to be faulted for not accepting such "realistic measures" as centralized war production, delaying the revolutionary process, and establishing a regular army. Such measures would have meant certain Soviet control, and in Orwell's eyes would have destroyed the entire project for which he had risked his life.



Orwell during his wartime stint at the BBC

Having barely escaped being captured, tortured, and killed by Stalin's agents, Orwell spent the rest of his life trying to tell the bitter truth about Communism, at a time when the entire Left, as Meyers writes, "was sadly deluded by Communist propaganda."

Indeed, it was after his return from Spain that Orwell produced the most devastating satire about Communism ever written, *Animal Farm*. At the time, of course, both Britain and France were allied with Soviet Russia; even T. S. Eliot turned down the book for Faber & Faber, and it might never have been published had not a smaller firm, run by his friend Fredric Warburg, agreed to take it on.

While writing the book, Orwell held a job he truly hated (one that became part of the plot of *1984*), writing propagandistic radio scripts for the BBC's Indian service, most of which were never heard by anyone. Nevertheless, a few years later, in 1949, Orwell gave his friend Celia Paget a list of political and intellectual figures he knew to be fellow-travelers or Communists. His concern, he told Paget, who worked for the British government's Information Research Department, was that they not worm their way "into important propaganda jobs where they [could] do us a lot of harm." This revelation, which surfaced a few years ago, has led many to condemn Orwell for trying to start a McCarthyite witch hunt. But as Meyers sensibly observes, "in the political context of 1949, his behavior seems necessary, even commendable."

Meyers relates in gripping detail Orwell's self-destructive path in his waning years, writing *1984* as he was near death in the cold, barren climate of Jura, an island 16 miles off the Scottish coast where he had chosen to live in retreat. Here we learn of his desperate attempts to find someone to marry and

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care for him, and his choice of Sonia Brownell, who (depending on whose version you believe) was either a sordid gold digger or a selfless angel who wished only to love and save the dying writer. Orwell did live long enough to complete his masterpiece, *1984*. The book, published seven months before his death in January 1950, foreshadowed much of the postwar world and gave hope to thousands who read it secretly in the Soviet sphere during the bitterest days of the Cold War.

Orwell's work lives on as a model of political truth from a man who wrote that "the destruction of the Soviet myth was essential" for any revival of a socialist movement; though ironically his works helped to disenchant many in future generations with the idea of socialism itself. Never fully a part of any political movement, socialist or otherwise, Orwell was in Meyers's telling a man who spoke "in the English tradition of prophetic moralists." Certainly if he were alive today, Orwell would not be on the right. He continued to believe in the kind of revolutionary utopia he felt he had discovered in Barcelona before the Communist takeover. But unlike most of his contemporaries on the left, he boldly attacked progressives' hypocrisies and ridiculed their practiced bohemianism, as when he struck out at the legion of "sandal-wearers and bearded fruit-juice drinkers who come flocking towards the smell of 'progress' like blue-bottles to a dead cat." And unlike Sartre and other intellectuals who felt the need to defend Stalinism even though they knew the truth, Orwell fearlessly stood his ground. He knew he had to choose the West, and stood with its leaders against the Eastern bloc.

Orwell's clear-sightedness made him a virtual pariah in left-wing circles. Yet through his writings he became a household name, a man seen by posterity as the rare prophet who saw the future and knew that it did not work. Conservatives may disagree with his adherence to the socialist faith, but owe him their respect for his firmness on behalf of the truth and for his desire to rescue the individual from the clutches of the all-powerful Behemoth. If we manage to escape what Meyers calls "the dark vision" of Orwell's *1984*, it will be due in part to him. **NR**

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■ CITY DESK ■

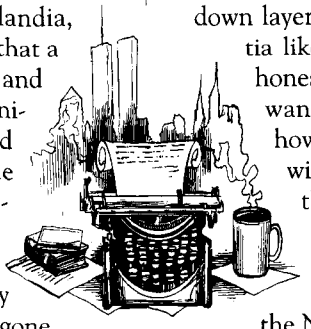
The Problem with Parents

RICHARD BROOKHISER

THERE is war in New York. Not Mets vs. Yankees, and certainly not Democrats vs. Republicans (Republicans were cleansed long ago). It is the war against parents.

The main front pits parents against the childless. For this contest, parents could hardly have picked a worse field than New York. Biological parents, or at least mothers, are all over the place. Their strollers give Boy Scouts in spirit the opportunity of helping to carry them down into the subways. But most of these parents are wards of the state, therefore not parents in the full sense of assuming responsibility for their families. To the bill-paying combatant they are like native levies who only know how to take scalps, and desert.

Once the indigent have been factored out, the residue faces heavy numerical odds. Only in a monastery or an aircraft carrier could they be worse. New York is Gaylandia, whose spokesmen assure us that a civil union, a picket fence, and an adopted child are the universal goal of every boy and boy; yet a glance into the gyms or the trendier restaurants still reveals a lot of churning gay singles. Then there are the childless by choice—those who have forgone reproduction to devote themselves to making money, writing plays, or staying up til two o'clock in the morning (not getting up at four to give a bottle). Such people are drawn in disproportionate numbers to a city so dedicated to art and mammon that they do not have to justify their predispositions. Finally, there are the undecideds: that vast compound demographic of the ambitious and the distracted, the people who can't pencil in making a decision until February, and the people who are incapable of making one at any time. New York attracts shoals of both.



So see the New York parents, awash in an ocean of the unsympathetic. To do the parents justice, it must be said that they provoke unsympathy by their gross and multiple obnoxiousness. Modern parents assume that wherever there is a hungry infant and a park bench, all that is needed to complete the picture is a naked breast. At feeding time places of public accommodation can look like a page out of *National Geographic*. The space between aisles in an urban grocery may be measured in Roach Motel widths, but New York parents think nothing of ramming through baby carriages, not the simple strollers of the poor, but infant SUVs with play stations on the roll bars. Come to think of it, real SUVs—the ones that don't belong to drug dealers, anyway—are bought mainly to ferry the little rascals to soccer practice. Parents in conversation lay down layers of boredom and dementia like banks of poison gas. Be honest: There was nothing you wanted more to know than how Trinity School compares with Demiurge Academy, or that little Weenus has learned to recycle. After nine rounds with a parent, I would rather talk about the NBA, or whither cinema.

■

Parents in conversation lay down layers of boredom and dementia like banks of poison gas.

■

The boorishness of parents is matched only by that of their children. Monster children have their defenders: "What's a poor kid supposed to do in a restaurant at 9:00 at night?" I don't know, eat? Instead they make repeated trips to the bathroom, whine that the salad isn't ice cream, punch each other, and engage in loud Arafat/Barak negotiations with their overtaxed elders. The kids probably aren't tired at all, just angry at being taken away from their web surfing. New York children in public make pacifist Unitarians wonder where the culture put its birch rods and sermons on Hell.

These are the firefights that run on everyone's internal CNN. But New York parents wage war on a second front, with a deadlier foe. They fight themselves.

Triumphant meritocracy means that every bright, ambitious New York parent (and there is no other kind) is struggling to hoist his children into a few scarce slots. The child's margin of advantage comes from his or her activities, which begin in preschool. German educators taught us to speak of kindergarten. Now we have garten-tilling. The exasperated parent flies from date to date, from karate lesson to kazoo class, anxious lest any chance be missed.

She is right to be anxious. Four years of snobbery, networking, and liberalism at Harvard, Yale, or some other Hogwarts for trial lawyers may not seem like a glittering prize, but securing a place in one really does guarantee success in life—if not the multi-millions earned by geeks in garages, then at least the safety net of membership in the upper middle class, where the game of upward mobility can begin again in the next generation. Success as a parent means raising children who will be able to buy French lessons for their own three-year-olds.

But New York parents also struggle against their own expectations. If they cannot do the best for their children, then they will have failed in their own eyes. Test-takers all their lives, they must submit blue books of love, multiple no-choice tests of their affection. If they don't make every effort, all their warm-heartedness will be negated. If they make every effort, they must have warm hearts.

I spoke recently with a dear friend, a mother of three, free of the worst of these vices (though she did get her oldest daughter, who has a voice, a lunch date with a music critic at the *New York Times*—try pulling that off from Omaha). She confessed, *à propos* of nothing, that in the middle of her life, for the first time she could understand the attractions of Thanatos, of ceasing on midnight with no pain. She is worn out; mother love in New York is a killer. NR

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■ FILM ■

Model Behavior

JOHN SIMON

WHEN it comes to feature films, Canada—so good at documentaries, short subjects, and animation—is jinxed. I have yet to see a Canadian feature that rises above promising, interesting, or very uneven. There have been popular successes and critical *succès d'estime*, and there have been masterworks made in Canada by non-Canadians (e.g., Bruce Beresford's extraordinary *Black Robe*), but we are still waiting for the great *Canadian* feature.

There have been many attempts at explanation, but none that compels. Certainly a lot of Canadian talent—writers, directors, actors—has migrated south of the border, where the money, if not the grass, is greener. But given the lower production costs in their home country, you would expect more of these successful filmmakers to return for an occasional Canadian triumph. And return they do, but somehow forget to pack the triumph in their baggage.

The latest contender is ***Stardom***, by Denys Arcand, who also made *The Decline of the American Empire* and *Jesus of Montreal*. It is the story, by Arcand and J. Jacob Potashnik, of the rise and (perhaps fortunate) fall of Tina Menzhal, who goes from obscurity to fashion-model stardom, and thence to domesticity. The film deals with the superficiality of runway and television fame with, unfortunately, equal lack of depth. It does have some incidental felicities, but whereas skin-deep beauty may do for a supermodel, it does not make for a super movie.

To quote the press kit, "the dramatic comedy scrutinizes the role of television in nurturing, exploiting, hyping, idolizing, and ultimately abandoning the very stars it creates." There, precisely, is the problem. The movie is so interested in lampooning TV talk and interview shows that it has not much left over for the victim or the world of fashion: the photographers, agents, publicists, rival models, men hungry for beautiful women, and other supernumeraries or hangers-on. Granted, all of them are there, but cartoon-thin amid the film's rather heftier pretensions.

Probably the first film to examine the fashion world was Jacques Becker's remarkable *Falbalas* (though, being made in 1945, it was even more concerned with the social situation in France at the end of the Occupation). It sidestepped the important presence of homosexuality on the couture scene, but it had the gifted and stunning Micheline Presle in the female lead, as opposed to *Stardom*'s 19-year-old Jessica Paré as Tina, neither especially talented nor particularly fetching.

■

Whereas skin-deep beauty may do for a supermodel, it does not make for a super movie.

■

Stardom does offer Tina's relationships, sexual or otherwise, with Philippe Gascon, the French-Canadian photographer who discovers the young hockey player on a small-town female team; with Bruce Taylor, a leading photographer and cutup, who makes her famous; with the New York fashion superagent Renny Ohayon, who dictates her every supermodel step; with the ambitious restaurateur Barry Levine, who abandons his family to become her near murderous lover; with her jealous rival model, Toni, with whom she has a lesbian affair; and with Blaine de Castillon, Canada's ambassador to the U.N., with whom she has the briefest and rockiest of marriages.

The wistful ending will not be revealed here, but given that Tina does not become much more than a cipher, it hardly matters. The satire on television, though often heavy-handed, comes off better, especially in the send-up of an egghead French talk show on the order of *Apostrophe*, except that an intellectual lightweight like Tina would never make it onto such a program.

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There are worthwhile supporting performances by an international cast including Charles Berling, Robert Lepage, Dan Aykroyd, and Thomas Gibson; with Frank Langella, as the hapless de Castillon, and Camilla Rutherford, as the annoying Toni, especially entertaining. No less international locations are splendidly shot by Canada's Guy Dufaux, and Denys Arcand's direction, with the further support of the production and costume design, delivers the look and sound, if not quite the feel of things. Still, even a film about soullessness could use a little more soul.

■ Soul, of a particularly factitious sort, is what the preposterous ***Pay It Forward*** peddles wholesale. It concerns 11-year-old Trevor, whose new social-studies teacher, Eugene Simonet, has a face scarred by burns, a coolly ironic manner, and a propensity to use big words for propaedeutic purposes. The assignment he puts on the blackboard, "Think of an idea to change our world and put it into action," daunts all but Trevor, who devises a scheme whereby every performer of a good deed should enjoin the recipient to repay it "forward," with three good deeds done unto others. This may strike viewers who don't respond to chain letters as undue triple payment for a single favor.

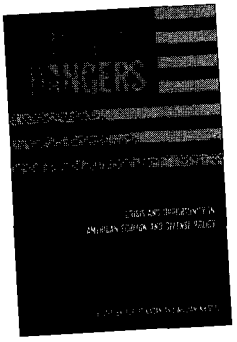
Trevor himself takes a bum home and feeds him (one good deed), and works on bringing romantically together his teacher and his mother, Arlene (which presumably counts as two good deeds). She is a decent, double-job-holding cafeteria and casino waitress (the setting is Las Vegas) who, alas, cannot shake the bottle or her roving, no-good husband, who comes home only sporadically to beat up his wife and child.

The film begins with a major police siege before a house where someone is being held hostage—we never learn who or by whom. A reporter covering the scene gets his car totaled, whereupon a rather-too-perfect stranger bestows on him his brand-new Jaguar. The good Samaritan is made to look sinister (he's holding a savage-looking hound on a short leash), which is a trick. The ensuing title card, "Four Months Earlier," is a bit inept—we never return to that siege—but it does explain the stranger's generosity: He is a payer-forward. In four months, it seems, the entire country, even Los Angeles, has gone paying-forward happy. There is an ending that, unlike Jaguars, we are not supposed to give away; it's so soggy and sappy that you probably couldn't even if you wanted to.

Loose ends abound. So, for instance, the bum Trevor fed is seen briefly later on trying to talk a young woman out of jumping off a bridge, but we never find out what happens to her. Arlene's alcoholic mother, who lives in her car, and a black man who goes to jail for trying to enforce righteousness with a gun, are dropped as casually as they were introduced. The love story lurches along with as many steps backward as forward, but, unlike Trevor, ends happily. The gods, it seems, punish us for our good deeds, a state of affairs particularly advantageous to filmmakers.

In his last film, Haley Joel Osment played a child who communicated with the dead. In this one, as Trevor, he becomes a Christ symbol: Let's hope that some day this talented youngster gets to be a normal kid. Kevin Spacey plays Eugene as persuasively as the part allows, but Helen Hunt goes one better, managing to rise above all the clichés heaped on Arlene to give a masterly performance. Smaller roles are, with admirable fairness, endowed with no smaller share of unbelievability, but at least the Nevada backgrounds are handsomely photographed by Oliver Stapleton, and Thomas Newman provides that rare score more suited to an auditorium than to a vomitorium. Mimi Leder directed from a screenplay by Leslie Dixon based on a novel by Catherine Ryan Hide. The luckless female trio plays prodigally into the hands of misogynists who would deny women equal moviemaking ability and rights.

That, of course, is nonsense. Several European women have exhibited compelling cinematic aptitude; it is to be hoped that in due time American—and even Canadian—women will follow suit. **NR**



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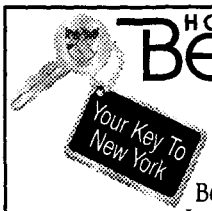

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

The Pot Wars Go On

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 17

TONY KNOWLES is the young, dashing, Democratic governor of Alaska, and he cannot like it to be treated as an old fogey, which is what is happening. One aggressor writes in the *Anchorage Daily News* on Monday asking the governor to grow up on the question of Proposition 5. If this proposition is approved, marijuana would be legal in Alaska, as it is in the Netherlands and (de facto) in France, and prospectively in Switzerland. The writer entitled his message to the governor, "Alaska adults can decide if pot is good for them."

Now that formulation is unsafe. Alaska adults can't decide whether pot is good for them; they can decide whether to use pot, never mind whether it's good for them or isn't. The position of the *Anchorage Daily News* article is, quite simply, that if you want to smoke pot in Alaska, all you have to do is buy it on the black market where it is readily available. The alternative, under Proposition 5, would be to buy it from licensed sellers, paying a royalty to the state exchequer, which would oversee questions of quality and, of course, distribution. Kids could always buy it even if it were proscribed, but then kids can do anything, including smoke tobacco, consume liquor, and procreate. And now hear this: Proposition 5 goes further, creating a commission to examine reparations for people whose assets have been seized in the ongoing travesty on civil rights, which authorizes confiscation of property, and often encourages it by permitting such property to meander over into police treasuries.

In Utah there is a similar plebiscite before the voters, called Initiative B, the Utah Property Protection Act. There is high dudgeon in Utah protesting the long arm of George Soros, the billionaire who has made an alleviation of the drug-penalty laws a cause. His motives in doing so are, not persuasively, explained by an associate, Ethan Nadelmann, who heads up the Lindesmith Center, a drug-policy research institute in New York. It's as simple as this, says Nadelmann: Soros's father was a Jewish lawyer in Naziland. He shielded his 14-year-old son by changing his name and having him pose as a godson of a government official. The boy had then to accompany his guardian, who went about confiscating the homes of Hungarian Jews sent to Auschwitz. This (we are told) permanently sensitized Soros to the dangers of statist usurpations. Many Utah lawmakers acknowledge the extremity of the state's law-enforcement establishment, but insist that moderated behavior should be an instrument of the legislature, not plebiscitary eruptions financed by a billionaire on the loose. Local supporters of Initiative B comment that human rights are not of mere parochial concern. They point out that the Mormon community in Utah felt no compunction about lobbying against gay marriages in Hawaii.

What's inching along, with tortured slowness, is a reaction against the excesses of the marijuana laws. Critics of moderation correctly point out that there is a difference between a reform of the marijuana laws designed to permit patients to get relief from marijuana, and flat-out legalization. Dr. Herbert Kleber, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia and medical director of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, makes the point that there is less reason to put medical marijuana on the ballot than the legalization of it. "They really are two totally different issues. One is in many ways a political issue, but the other is a scientific issue. Marijuana for medicinal purposes should not be decided by referendum. Would you have had a referendum on penicillin for pneumonia?"

But that license, acknowledged and approved in California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Alaska, Maine, and D.C., is being used to propel the more general sanctions, as under Proposition 5 in Alaska. California's Mendocino County, upholding the tradition that Californians will always—somewhere, somehow—identify themselves with extremes, has scheduled a county initiative which would permit anyone to grow marijuana anywhere in Mendocino. There is cultural attraction to the idea, in part because Mendocino is a fertile area for the best pot—or so, I hasten to comment, I have heard.

"Do you *have an appointment?*"

Although the subject comes up, it certainly will not appear on the agenda of either of the political parties. In little enclaves of intelligence and courage one spots the exceptions: Gov. Gary Johnson of New Mexico and (former) mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore. But all that can be said with absolute confidence about them is that they will never run for national office. Even with George Soros behind them.

Fun & Games in NYC

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 20

THE great banquet at the Waldorf Astoria was the 55th in honor of Al Smith. "Your great grandfather," Al Gore twitted the master of ceremonies, Al Smith IV, "was my favorite kind of governor: the kind who ran for president and lost." The dinner regularly produces the biggest guns in American politics. The crowded ballroom, with the five tiers of grandees seated on the dais, could observe the two contenders seated together for two hours, separated only by the majestically garbed new archbishop of New York, Edward M. Egan. It was the first social scene ever featuring both players. The audience, jocularly referred to by Gov. Bush as the "1 percent" so regularly demonized by Candidate Gore, were there to effect corporal works of mercy—almost $1 million were realized for Catholic hospitals and medical centers—but also to wallow in the political excitement of the day.

A theatrical flare was sparked at the very first moment by the histrionic behavior of the vice president. Everyone was standing, heads bowed, for the benediction—captains of industry, the governor and former governors, the mayor and former mayors, contenders Hillary Clinton and Rick Lazio—and silence. What were we waiting for? A full minute went by, then—enter Vice President Gore. God could now be addressed. Metropolitan Opera star

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Emily Palley could sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," and the guests could be seated.

The upcoming municipal question is on the Mets vs. the Yankees. The MC polled the audience, and established the Yankees as marginally the winners. The applause-meter, at the Al Smith dinners, is king. The 100 guests seated on the dais are introduced one by one as they walk onstage, and everyone is alert to the relative intensity of welcomes. Former mayor Ed Koch is always a heavy favorite. So was Mayor Giuliani. Lazio greatly outdistanced Hillary. Exquisite care was taken to cope with the problem of Gore/Bush. It was handled with episcopal skill, by introducing them jointly. That way the crowd would not demoralize the loser.

It is largely, though by no means exclusively, a Catholic audience. That implies tribal hospitality to the Democratic figure. On the other hand, only the Republican was pro-life. And when he got around to saying this, he won hearty approval, candidates Gore and Hillary notably rigid.

The tradition at these dinners is frank political congeniality, heavily leavened by humor. There is sometimes an edge. In 1976, candidate Jimmy Carter declined to stay at the table after his own speech, to hear that of opponent President Gerald Ford. This time, the humor was sharp, but less than icy. Gore thought back on the illustrious Smith, who "ran on an agenda that was revolutionary for his time—a 45-cent minimum wage, limiting the work week to six days, building a bridge to the 1930s—and I want to say it's quite a tribute to Al Smith that Governor Bush has adopted the same agenda."

George W. was equally self-deprecating. "'You know, George,'" he quoted his wife's advice, "'this is an important crowd. Whatever you do, don't try to be charming or witty or debonair—just be yourself.'"

Gov. Bush referred to one guest. "And I see Bill Buckley's here tonight, a fellow Yale man. We go way back, and have a lot in common. Bill wrote a book at Yale. I read one. He founded the Conservative party. I started a few parties myself. Bill won every debate he ever had—and, well, I know how that feels."

It was more of the same for five minutes. "We just had some great news out of Yugoslavia. I'm especially pleased Milosevic has stepped down. One less polysyllabic name to remember."

But he closed on a note of impressive generosity and even solemnity. He spoke about his opponent: "Like me, he married up. This is clearly a man who respects and loves his wife and his family. You also learn to see his strengths, and my opponent has many. He is a person of amazing energy and skill and determination. I can't wish him success, but I do wish him well."

That is high use of the language, and of civilized sentiments. And to close, "Your Excellency, Laura and I would like you to come and visit with our family next year. I'll send you the address as soon as I know what it is."

Rich and Poor and Not So Rich and Poor

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 24

THE august Hudson Institute of Indianapolis and Washington, the thinking man's think tank, is wild with activity this week. In Washington, it is celebrating the achievements of the omni-talented Caspar Weinberger. He was secretary of defense for President Reagan and remains one of the sharpest eyes among senior statesmen. And Hudson's director of economic research, Alan Reynolds, has analyzed the burden of Gore-talk respecting rich and poor, and gives us, in NATIONAL REVIEW, illuminating insights.

For instance, did it ever occur to anyone that the abolition of the estate tax can't automatically be assumed to benefit the very rich testator? Guess why? Because he's dead! He can't take with him even a dispensation from the IRS.

The above may tempt you to scoff, but the figures are there. You become statistically very rich (top 1 percent) when, to round off the figure, you accumulate $300,000. When you or your wife write a will, in the overwhelming number of cases, you will name more than a single legatee. The fissiparous process begins, and everybody knows that the descendants of John D. Rockefeller are in the thousands.

But earthbound analysis is also worth attention, and it pays to force yourself to recall that families with two workers earn more than those with no workers. In 1999, median income among family heads who worked full-time all year was $58,502. Among families with two earners, median income was $74,711. Now this development, which would appear innocuous in economic terms, has the effect of putting one half of all two-earner families in the highest fifth of income distribution. When Mr. Gore goes about the country blasting the rich, he is blasting one half of two-earner families.

Much emphasis has recently been put, by critics of economic momentum, on the stability of the lowest earners, the bottom one fifth. It is said that the gaps between two-earner and zero-earner families have grown wider over time. This is so because real wages climb. There are 2.2 workers per family among the top 20 percent of earners. In the bottom fifth, you have a consolidated figure of 0.8. That means less than one earner working full time. If real wages rise, the two-earner families in the top fifth are mathematically certain to have faster income rises than families in the bottom fifth, where full-time workers are rare.

Train your eyes on the percentage of families earning more than $75,000. In constant dollars, these have risen from 12 percent in 1980 to 18.4 percent in 1997. That means, correlatively, that to be counted in the top 5 percent now requires $145,000 per year, where in 1988, $92,000 would elevate you there. The impression will be that the earnings are rising precipitately. But that is a statistical illusion. Because any top-income group has no ceiling, a few huge incomes can also grossly exaggerate the average at the top.

What we suffer from is the absence of truly reliable practical information. A learned tax specialist said it all, ruminating on a conversation with an old friend, a classmate. "He lives in the Midwest and does cataract removals. Three hundred every—I forget, every week, every month, every year. He nets one million dollars." How is it that the market permits/tolerates that? How much administrative cost is necessary to our system of public health? How would the application of fluctuating deductibles affect the burden of medical costs?

These are intelligent concerns, and not much light is shed on them by rich/poor talk, let alone talk that suggests that the rich get that way by burdening the non-rich. Deep veins of thought and inquiry run through the economic system, but not much light is coming through in the high holy days of democratic practice. Caspar Weinberger was appointed director of finance for the state of California by Ronald Reagan. A year later he was swept up by Richard Nixon. After that, he went to war as head of DoD. He has much to tell us.

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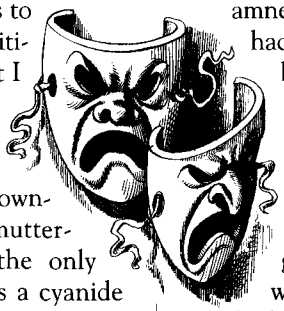
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

I AM up that famous creek without a paddle. The deadline for this column falls two weeks before the election, but by the time you read it you will know who won. Now I know how the author of "The Lady or the Tiger?" felt. He solved his problem by ending the story just before the door opened, but I can't create suspense because you know something that I don't. The only way I can write around the last days of the autumn of our discontent is to let my mind range over political loose ends and see what I can tie up—i.e., free association.



I use "mind" advisedly. Yesterday they found me downtown, wandering around muttering, "If Al Gore wins, the only prescription drug I want is a cyanide capsule." A nice policeman brought me home. I calmed down for a while but I lost it again when I turned on American Movie Classics.

You know Al Gore has gotten to you when you're watching *Psycho* and all you can think about is what you wouldn't give for that high-flow shower head. No wonder Janet Leigh didn't hear the old lady come in. The water was rushing and cascading down on her in a deafening roar. So much water was jetting out so fast and furious that her blood washed right down the drain while she was still alive. Those were the good old days when showers worked faster than arteries, but now Leigh would empty before the tub did and Al Gore would take credit for it.

I never realized how monstrous Gore was until the debates. One reason for my delayed reaction is the obsession with Bill Clinton that has consumed conservatives for seven years, making the care and feeding of additional obsessions not only unnecessary but impossible. I was also sidetracked by the new female politics. Women are now expected to assess candidates according to which husband they remind us of, ex or current, but being a spinster automatically disqualified me for membership in the Wronged Caucus, encouraging my natural tendency to swim against the tide until I developed a mental block against considering the possibility that there had been any Al Gores in my life.

But suddenly, during the first debate, the mists of time parted and I found one. I hadn't thought about him for years. Not that I had forgotten him—no mental block could produce that degree of amnesia—but until that moment I had never made the connection between him and Al Gore.

It was 1955. Some of my sorority sisters cooked up a trip to an amusement park. They were all going steady but I wasn't, so they set about getting me a blind date. There was a consultation, then somebody said, "I hear he's really brainy. He'll be perfect for Flo."

He was so handsome it was hard to believe he was a blind date, but even harder to believe was the way he had dressed for a night on the midway. The other boys wore slacks and sports shirts but he wore a cream linen suit, white shirt and tie, fluted monogrammed handkerchief in his breast pocket, black-and-white laced wingtips, and a hat—a *hat* hat with a snap brim, colored band, and creased crown, made of soft summer straw.

He did all the things you do at amusement parks, but he did them differently. At the shooting gallery he pulled a plain handkerchief out of his pants pocket and draped it over his shoulder under the gun butt. At the test of strength he did limbering-up exercises, squatting and stretching his fingers like a concert pianist, until the crowd tittered. Tall and very well-built, he rang the bell, but he had made such an ass of himself that he came off as the 90-pound weakling instead of Charles Atlas. He reversed everything; it was as if he preferred the negative to the photograph.

When he bought cotton candy for us I held my breath, afraid he would ask for a knife and fork. At the merry-go-round, which he called a "carousel," he bypassed the prancing, proud-maned steeds and steered me over to a pair of ostriches, lifting me up onto the inside one. It was reversal time again: Nobody ever rode the ostriches. They were for "drips" and "squares," but now I was on one—sidesaddle.

He mounted the other and launched into an explanation of how a carousel works. It consisted of the usual stuff women have to listen to—gears, axles, valves, rotation—but soon a glottal tension crept into his voice, and with it a different vocabulary. What intrigued him about carousels, he said, was that on the surface all was sweetness and innocence, but "underneath" and "down below" and "in the darkness" under the revolving platform were "the bowels of the machine."

He pointed to the hole in the ostrich's neck that was sliding up and down on the brass pole, and said, "In and out, in and out, in and out."

Suddenly, he handed me his hat, pulled out another handkerchief, and jackknifed sideways until his head projected out over the platform's edge. He vomited quickly, wiped his mouth, and then sat up straight on his ostrich. Seconds later he did it again, stretching himself out like a trick rider until his body was parallel to the platform. It was bend, heave, wipe, resume seat; the cleanest, best-timed, most thoroughly calibrated barf I ever saw.

It happened so fast that few people even noticed him except some children behind us who said, "Oh, look at that man." I had been hearing these words all evening, but this time the tone was laudatory. Obviously unaware that he was throwing up, the kids thought he *was* a trick rider.

He gestured for his hat and I gave it to him. I was afraid he would make a pass later on but he did not. At 19 I couldn't psych him out, but I can now: It wasn't me he wanted to sodomize, it was that wooden ostrich.

And so now we have a new president. I hope it's the one with an instinctive appreciation of the great tradition of normal, fun-loving frat boys: Wait until you're at the top of the Ferris wheel, then everybody throw up at once. NR

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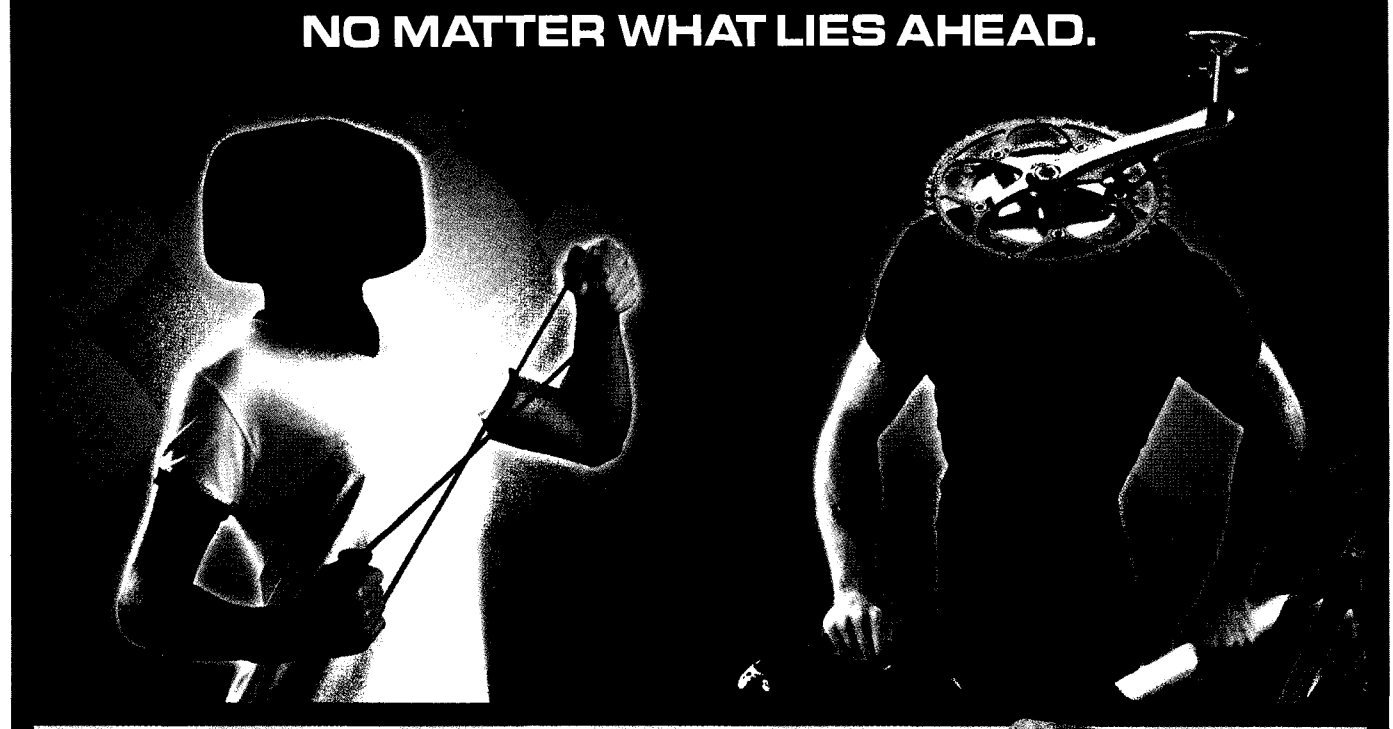

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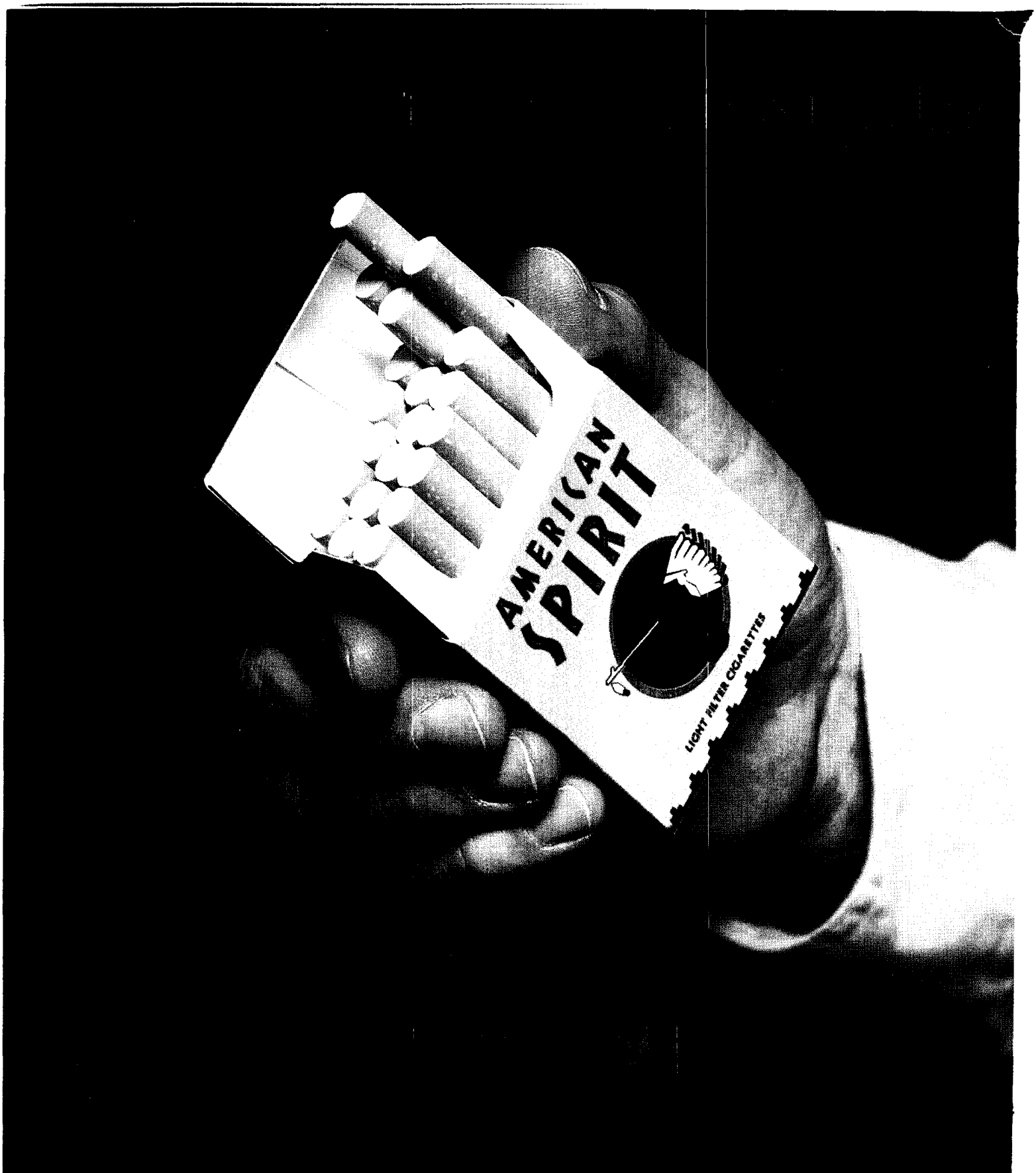

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